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THE TRAGIC EMPRESS



THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

The TRAGIC EMPRESS

A Record of Intimate Talks with
the Empress Eugénie—1901-1919

BY
MAURICE PALÉOLOGUE

OF THE
ACADÉMIE FRANÇAISE

TRANSLATED BY
HAMISH MILES



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First Edition

THIS above all: to thine own self be true.
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

HAMLET I, *iii.*

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frontispiece

EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

Drawn and engraved by Alfred Cornilliet

Printed by Alfred Chardon, Paris

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Painted by Alfred de Dreux, lithograph by Emile Lassalle

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THE PRINCE IMPERIAL

After the painting belonging to the Empress

Painted by Ad. Yvon, lithograph by Soulange Teissier

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FLY-LEAF OF "THE IMITATION OF CHRIST" GIVEN TO
THE PRINCE IMPERIAL BY EMPRESS EUGÉNIE,
WITH THIS NOTE IN HER HAND:

*"Chaque fois que tu liras ce livre, ce sera une pensée pour ta mère.
Eugénie." ("Each time you read this book, it will represent a thought
of your mother.")*

Under this note a scapular

facing p. 41

EMPRESS EUGÉNIE AND HER SON

Painted by Desandre, lithograph by Bettanier

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Gift of the Baroness d'Alexandry d'Orengiani

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By Jules David, print by Lamoureux

*This engraving is from the collection of the "Moniteur de la Mode"
published by Ad. Goubaud et Cie., Paris*

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*By Lefèvre (1853)
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Lithograph by A. Lacanche

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GOLD BRACELET CONTAINING MINIATURES OF THE EMPEROR, EMPRESS EUGÉNIE, PRINCESS MATHILDE, KING JÉRÔME AND HIS SON

*Originally in the possession of Empress Eugénie, who presented it to a
princess of the court. Gift of the Baroness d'Alexandry d'Orengiani*

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BUST OF EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

Painted on a plate manufactured at Sèvres

facing p. 156

P R E L I M I N A R Y

IT WAS through the Princess Mathilde that I had the honor of knowing the Empress Eugénie. One evening towards the end of May, 1901, the Princess, with that quick, refreshing candor which always marked her, said to me:

"The Empress will soon be coming to Paris. She has read your books; I have sometimes told her about you; and she is curious to make your acquaintance. Now tell me quite frankly: are you disposed to meet her, notwithstanding your official position?"

"Certainly, madame. It will be only proper if I ask the authorization of my Minister, M. Delcassé. But I know his generous open-mindedness, and I need not doubt his consent."

"Then it is agreed? I can inform the Empress of your visit?"

"I must thank Your Imperial Highness in advance."

And with a mischievous air she continued: "The visit will be a long one, I warn you. An hour . . . two hours . . . three hours. . . . Even in the days of the Empire her audiences used to be endless.

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Once she began to talk, she lost all sense of time. She was indefatigable, and would hurry her listener over the most varied fields, upholding her opinions with a zeal and tenacity, and sometimes even an eloquence, that were truly extraordinary. I have often seen the most serious and sober persons, not courtiers at all, forced to surrender to her. This was in striking contrast to the Emperor's audiences, for he would utter barely half a dozen words before withdrawing into a cloud of impenetrable dumbness. For my own part, I have always been proof against the influence of my august cousin. We share hardly any elective affinities! In the old days we could never agree on anything . . . and we have continued to be like this, although it has never prevented us from living on good terms. You know how my brother, Prince Napoleon, detested her. He accused her of every possible fault, and would grant her no merits at all. He was wrong; for her nature is very proud and very courageous, and it has been greatly ennobled by misfortune."

"Does she allow one to discuss her reign?"

"I myself avoid the subject with her. We should not get far without quarreling. But I am certain

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that she will be delighted to talk about it with you. What's more, you can put entire trust in everything she may tell you: her memory is prodigious and she is the soul of sincerity."

A few days later, Princess Mathilde wrote to me:

The Empress Eugénie has just arrived in Paris. She is stopping as usual at the Hôtel Continental, and will be pleased to receive you next Saturday, at eleven o'clock.

.

The notes which follow were set down while I was under the immediate impression left by the conversations which they reproduce. My own recollections will thus be found in their first form and their original animation; and for their exactness this is the best warranty.

I should add that the course of their recital will make clear the conformity of this publication to the wishes of the Empress.

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I

Presentation to the Empress.—The spectacle of the Tuileries.—Napoleon III: his nobility in disaster.—The verdict of history.—Glories and mirages of the Second Empire: baptism of the Prince Imperial; the "Te Deum" of Solferino; annexation of Savoy and the fêtes of Annecy; opening of the Suez Canal.

SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 1901

AT THE stated hour, Franceschini Piétri, the aged and devoted secretary of the Empress, introduced me to her presence.

Despite her seventy-five years, she still retains the traces of her former beauty. The face has kept its fineness, with the modeling of the features clean cut as on a medal. The brow gives a hint of its height beneath her white hair, a brow manifestly predestined for the diadem. The lively, close-set eyes shine with a hard, somber gleam, where one detects the

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artifice of the black penciling that underlines the rim of the faded eyelashes. Her shoulders, held rigid and erect, do not so much as touch the back of the armchair. The hands, still extremely delicate, are of a pale amber color, as if they had been steeped in some balm. From her whole person, in fact, there springs a curious impression of majesty, of something hieratic, and of ruin.

While our conversation was in the stage of the opening commonplaces, I noticed on the small table beside her a pile of books, with numerous markers projecting from them: *L'Europe et la Revolution Française*, by Albert Sorel; the *History of the German People*, by Janssen; and Darmesteter's *Les Prophètes d'Israël*. Beyond them I caught sight of another pile, one of English books, the titles of which I could not distinguish. Finally, in the middle of the table, two large photographs, with a bunch of roses glowing between them—portraits of Napoleon III and the Prince Imperial.

Before long we touched on questions of foreign politics. After speaking with emotion of Queen Victoria, "that noble and steadfast friend" whom she

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has recently lost,¹ the Empress questioned me about Anglo-French relations. She unreservedly admires the ability of the recovery which Delcassé² was able to effect after the incident of Fashoda, and is impressed as well as delighted by the confidence inspired in London by his courage, his firmness, his objective spirit, his clear-sighted grasp of the great European problems; she likewise bears testimony to the growing authority of our ambassador, Paul Cambon. On this point she does not simply take stock of the appreciations, more or less vague, more or less competent, that crop up in the newspapers, but produces exact evidence: a conversation, for instance, which she has had with Queen Victoria, or King Edward, or the Duke of Connaught; or remarks coming directly from Lord Salisbury, Lord Lansdowne, Balfour, Lord Curzon, Asquith, Chamberlain, Lord Selborne, etc. I felt all the more pleasure in filling out her information, as Delcassé, who never loses sight of his work, told me yesterday: "Since the Empress Eugénie is so frequently in contact with the ruling families of England, Spain, and

¹ Queen Victoria had died at Osborne on January 22, 1901.

² See Biographical Notes.

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Russia, she might on occasion be able to lend us some very useful aid by spreading my ideas in her vicinity. So do not hesitate to put my program before her. I even authorize you to tell her that my ideas envisage the general liquidation of the old-standing disputes between France and England as only a prologue—the necessary prologue to a much wider and more intimate agreement, to which I dream of some day attaching the Franco-Russian alliance. For I can imagine no other system that could outweigh the formidable coalition of the Germanic powers. . . . Mention to her also my last negotiations with Madrid on the subject of Morocco, in case she may soon be meeting Queen Christina. . . .”

The Empress is no less exactly informed regarding our relations with Russia, by reason of the friendship uniting her with the Dowager-Empress Maria Fedorovna, younger sister of Queen Alexandra. In this way she knows all the inside history of the tortuous intrigue pursued last year by William II, under the noble pretext of reëstablishing peace in the Transvaal, but in reality with the sole intention of confusing the cards and exciting the distrust of Russia against England, of France against Russia, of

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England against France and Russia. She likewise knows the conditions which brought the Emperor Nicholas to let the Kaiser bluff him into nominating Field-Marshal Waldersee to the supreme command of the international forces in China,¹ conditions so pitiful that William II could indulge in the joy of addressing his marshal in the following words of solemn farewell: "I salute you at the moment when you are about to leave German soil. . . . It is extremely significant that your nomination should have had its origin in a wish and a proposal of the Emperor of All the Russias, the powerful monarch whose sway is felt to the very farthest bounds of Asia. The fact is one more proof of how close is the bond of military traditions between the two Empires."

When these various questions had been exhausted, the Empress rose, not without difficulty, from her armchair. Supposing that she was bringing my audi-

¹ In the spring of 1901 a revolution directed against the hated foreigners, the "Boxer" rebellion, produced an upheaval throughout the whole of northern China, and the foreign legation accredited to Peking had to sustain a prolonged siege. To relieve them, an expeditionary corps composed of French, Russian, English, German, and Japanese troops, had to be dispatched to the Gulf of Chih-li.

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ence to an end, I made as if to offer my farewell greeting. But she protested vigorously:

"Oh no! Don't go away yet! My old legs are so stiff and full of aches that I need to stretch them by taking a few steps. Will you be good enough to walk beside me for a moment, as if we were strolling together?"

In this way we passed slowly across the two *salons* of which her apartment consists. Their windows, flung wide open, look straight out over the Tuileries. It was a radiant morning. In the keen, bracing air the fresh greenery of the chestnut trees threw its gentle shade round the whiteness of the statues. Several times we lingered to gaze on this superb scene—one of the particular places in the world where one is most fully aware of the fickleness of fortune, the fragility of empires, the perpetual flux of things. . . . An exclamation escaped me:

"How can Your Majesty endure this spectacle?"

"What! Do you too ask me that? Oh yes! I know they think me insensitive because I take rooms in this hotel, where I have the Tuileries constantly before my eyes. But after all, nothing makes the slightest difference to me any longer! What mat-

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ters one spectacle or another, compared with the memories I bear in my innermost heart? Why, there are times when I feel as if I had been dead for a long, long time! I live now only among shadows, so even of myself I fashion the image of a shadow. . . . But sometimes I have moments of waking, moments of extraordinary violence and intensity. And then whole scenes out of my past come rushing back into my mind; I see persons, faces, attitudes, gestures; I see again the smallest circumstances, the smallest details; I think I am there among them again. It is tragic."

And with these words she resumed her seat, her head high, her shoulders stiff and straight. Pointing a finger to the portrait of Napoleon III placed beside her, she said:

"I very much hope that our intercourse will not end with your visit today, and that you will frequently give me the pleasure of a talk with you. But on this first meeting of ours I am very anxious to tell you something of the nobility, the selflessness, the magnanimity which the Emperor possessed. In the days when we were happy, I always found him simple and good, charitable and full of kind-

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ness. He endured contradiction and calumny with admirable indulgence. . . . And when disaster overwhelmed us, he carried his stoicism and his meekness to the point of sublimity. If you could have seen him during his last years, at Chislehurst! Never one word of complaint, of blame, of recrimination! Often I used to beg him to defend himself, to repulse some impudent attack or the vile execrations hurled at him, to check once and for all the flood of insults that was endlessly pouring over us. But he would meekly reply: 'No, I shall not defend myself. . . . There are some catastrophes so painful to a nation that it has the right to fling all the blame on to its chief, even unjustly. . . . A monarch, and especially an emperor, would degrade himself by trying to evade the guilt, for he would be pleading his own cause against his own people. . . . For a sovereign there are no excuses, no extenuating circumstances. It is his highest prerogative to assume himself, and himself alone, every responsibility incurred by those who have served him—or betrayed him.' These were noble words, sir; and I shall never forget them. They have been my support and my light for thirty years. And in spite

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of many promptings I have never consented to write the recollections of my reign. . . . Only occasionally, as today, I indulge myself by opening my heart before sympathetic persons."

Without leaving me time to thank her for this last expression, she abruptly resumed in an accent of passion:

"I have only one favor to ask of God now—that, old as I am, I may yet live long enough to see France find in her heart more justice towards us. . . . Do you think, sir—do you think that I shall ever see the rehabilitation of the Empire? Tell me frankly, what do they think of us nowadays?"

"It seems to me, madame, that for Napoleon III the period of crying injustice, the period of anathemas, is over, and that he is being judged with a fairly open mind. . . . Look at the history of the Second Empire which M. de la Gorce is publishing; its fifth volume has just appeared, and brings us down to the days following Sadowa and Querétaro. Now, the Emperor's policy may often be criticized, and even condemned, in this work, but the lofty idealism of his inspirations, and his chivalrous generosity of character, are recognized throughout. . . .

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The very fact of my being here, in Your Majesty's presence, is no less significant. I am a functionary of the Republic, and surely the fact that I am able, with my Minister's authorization, to call upon the Empress Eugénie, is proof in itself of the universally tempered spirit which is now felt as regards the Napoleonic régime! So much for the present. What will be the verdict of the future?"

"Yes, yes! That's what I am burning to know. How will the future judge us?"

"I was asking myself that very question not very long ago. . . . A couple of months ago I was in Rome. I was meditating before the Column of Trajan, mindful of a book which I am preparing on the Eternal City, and I asked myself, of the sovereigns of modern times, whose figure could best evoke that of Trajan. The name of Napoleon III sprang suddenly to my mind. And dare I confess, madame, that I almost instantly rejected it? Why? Because one closed his reign in triumph, and the other in disaster! But further reflection made my first idea seem feasible. In both emperors, and in the same degree, you will find personal modesty and generosity, a love of the common weal, a lively sense of

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social justice and harmony, and a lofty anxiety to reconcile the necessities of power with the boons of liberty. Similarly, their Cæsarean imaginations left them too much open to the intoxication of a military apotheosis. Despite his dazzling victories in Germania, that adventurous expedition in which Trajan let himself be drawn on towards the confines of Persia, and even into Adiabene and Colchis, at a time when his legions had so much to do on the Rhine and the Danube—that expedition was no better advised than the Mexican expedition. . . .”

The Empress gave a sigh.

“It comforts me to hear you!”

And at that moment her traveling-clock struck noon.

“Oh! Midday already!” she exclaimed. “Can you stay a few minutes longer?”

Whereupon, with a swift gesture, she turned the clock round towards me.

“And now,” she added, “I shan’t see the time any more. You will leave when you please. . . . As you are trying so loyally to understand my husband’s person and the part he played, ask me what

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questions you choose. I shall be happy to answer them."

"Ah, madame! The whole history of the Second Empire is what I should like to question you about! But as it is now I myself who have to watch the clock, I have to keep count of the time which Your Majesty is pleased to grant me."

"In that case, ask me only one question for today. The rest will come later."

I asked her:

"Among all the splendid moments which were the milestones of Your Majesty's reign, which were the most radiant and inspiring? Those, I mean especially, which spread the most enticing visions before your eyes?"

Without the least hesitation she answered:

"First and foremost, the christening of the Prince Imperial, on June 14, 1856. During the drive from the Tuileries to Notre-Dame, I was alone with the Emperor in our state wedding-coach. The Prince Imperial, his attendants and nurse, were in the preceding carriage. It was about six o'clock in the evening. Marshals were riding in procession beside our doors. We were frantically cheered. The sun

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was just beginning to sink and the Rue de Rivoli was glowing purple; we filed along in this dazzling light. Beside me the Emperor remained silent, doing nothing but return the salutes. I myself was equally silent, for my heart was uplifted by an inexpressible joy, and I kept inwardly repeating to myself: 'It is through this child, through *my son*, that the dynasty of the Napoleons will take final root in the soil of France, just as eight centuries ago the House of Capet was there implanted; it is *he* who will put the final seal on the work of his father. . . .' And yet a secret voice kept whispering in my ear that the same official pomps, the same salvos of artillery, the same peals of bells, had celebrated the christenings of the Dauphin Louis XVII, of the King of Rome, the Duc de Bordeaux, the Comte de Paris. And what had befallen them, poor children? Prison—death—exile! But another and a stronger voice was quick to reassure me, making my heart swell and filling me with confidence and pride. . . . At the close of the ceremony, when the Emperor raised our son aloft in his arms to show him to the people, my emotion suddenly became so poignant that my legs

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gave way beneath me and I had abruptly to sit down. . . .

"After that magnificent memory, and second only to that in its brilliance, I retain another which is framed under the vaulted roof of Notre-Dame. It is of the *Te Deum* on July 3, 1859, for our victory at Solferino. You will remember that during the war the Emperor had intrusted me with the regency, and so it was in my capacity as Regent, with the Prince Imperial on my left, that I went to Notre-Dame. Nothing could convey to you the crowd's enthusiasm. There were moments when the uproar of cheering was such that we went past military bands without so much as hearing them. . . . On the way back we were pelted with flowers; they rang on the cuirasses of the bodyguard like grapeshot, and our carriage was full of them; my son was quivering with joy, clapping his hands, and throwing the prettiest kisses to the crowds. On that day, too, I had the dazzling certainty that God was reserving for my child the glorious mission of crowning his father's work."

She paused for a moment, her eyelids closed and cheeks paled, as if the quickening of these visions

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shook her to the depths of her soul. And then, with a kind of smiling vexation, she continued:

"And the third time that my eyes were dazzled by mirages of the future I hardly dare confess to you. It will strike you as very frivolous. . . . But no matter! I count on your indulgence: this was a time when I had not yet been prentice to calamity. My third resplendent illusion was this. . . . You know that during the summer of 1860 the Emperor paid a visit to Savoy and the county of Nice, which he had just annexed. I accompanied him. It was not a journey; it was a triumphal progress. The Emperor's happiness seemed to transfigure him; he appeared to be living in a dream, under an enchanted spell. At one stroke he had forgotten all the reproaches which the Peace of Villafranca had so unjustly drawn on his head; and I myself was equally happy and transported. Well, on August 29th the inhabitants of Annecy had organized a regatta on the lake for the evening of our arrival. Our gondola, festooned with purple and towed by twenty rowers, was followed by a whole flotilla of light craft hung with multicolored lanterns. In the stern a kind of deck had been built, on which the

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Emperor and I were throned in state, side by side. The sky was ablaze with stars. Here and there in the procession were bands. Now and then the whole landscape would be lit up by Bengal lights or showers of fire, or sheaves of rockets. It was magical. . . . As we had just been presiding at a gala dinner, I was in a low-cut dress, with my diadem and my most splendid jewels. It was a warm evening, but I had flung a great scarlet burnous with gold fringes over my shoulders, and for a moment, so as to enjoy the spectacle more fully, I stood up on our deck. Immediately, from every vessel the cry broke out 'Long live the Empress!' I was beaming with joy. 'You look like a *dogaréssa*!' the Emperor said to me. And indeed I imagined myself aboard the *Bucentoro*. A little more and I would have flung my ring into the lake, as the Doge used to do when he presided at the betrothal of Venice and the Adriatic. For my own part, I pictured myself as present at the wedding, for all time, of France and the Empire."

Without pause or transition she went on:

"My fourth dazzling memory, and the last, is one that will surprise you a little; in any case, you will

be judging it very late in the day: it is of November 18, 1869, at the inauguration of the Suez Canal. . . . Eighteen-sixty-nine! A sad year for the Empire! Outside the gates, a threatening Prussia, a thankless Italy, and the other powers sulking or spiteful . . . and within, disaffection and restlessness; a Press ignoble in its insolence and bad faith, continual strikes, riotous manifestations, the régime undermined in all directions. Even those who had most to gain from the upholding of the dynasty gleefully read Rochefort's ¹ *La Lanterne* every week; a wind of madness was sweeping over France. To make matters worse, the Emperor was ill, gloomy, and discouraged, and could see nothing around him but mournful omens. One day he handed me a gazette from Rome, a gazette published under the censorship of the Vatican; and what did I read? The announcement of our forthcoming funeral!

"The ceremonial opening of the Canal was fixed for November 18th, at eight o'clock in the morning, in the waters of Ismailia. There was a real Egyptian sky, a light of enchantment, a resplendence as of dreams. I was awaited by fifty vessels, all

¹ See Biographical Notes.

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beflagged, at the entrance to Lake Timsa. My yacht, *L'Aigle*, at once took the head of the procession, and the yachts of the Khedive, the Emperor Francis Joseph, the Prince Royal of Prussia, Prince Henry of the Netherlands, followed at less than a cable's length. The spectacle was so supremely magnificent, and proclaimed so proudly the greatness of the French régime, that I could contain myself no longer, I was exultant. That frightful nightmare I had brought away from Paris had suddenly vanished, as at the touch of some magic ring. And then, for the last time, I believed that a great future was in store for my son, and prayed God to help me in the heavy task that would soon be laid upon me if the Emperor's health did not take a turn for the better. . . . A year later we had been dethroned!"

A moment of solemn silence, and she went on:

"And now, sir, I shall detain you no longer. . . . I thank you for the kindness with which you have listened to me. And I am in hopes of our seeing each other again."

The clock showed that it was ten minutes to one.

II

The "mistakes" of Napoleon III; the principle of nationalities.—"What do you think of the second of December?" Theory of dictatorship: "the shirt of Nessus."—Prestige of the Second Empire in Europe. Was the war of 1870 predestined?

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1903

I THANKED the Empress for the messages of sympathy which she had conveyed to me last autumn on the death of my mother. In this connection, she said to me:

"I have suffered so much in my life that I have lost the faculty of suffering on my own account; nowadays I suffer only through others, and for them. . . . I thought also that I had lost the faculty for tears; but none the less I did weep the other day. Yes, I wept at the news of the burning down of my beloved villa at Biarritz.¹ Have you noticed

¹ The Villa Eugénie, transformed into the Hôtel du Palais, was destroyed by fire on February 2, 1903. It was there, notably, that in October, 1865, Bismarck held those mysterious conferences with Napoleon III which had their logical issue in the following year at Sadowa.

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this? That all the places in which I lived my life as a sovereign, where I knew pride and the fascination of power, have perished in flames—the Tuileries, Saint-Cloud, Biarritz!”

And after a sigh, she went on:

“Have you ever thought of the conversation we had a couple of years ago?”

“I have; and especially since my bereavement, by cutting me off from the world, gave me the leisure for much reading. I then confirmed the opinion that I expressed to Your Majesty two years ago. The period of pamphleteering and insults in regard to the reign of Napoleon III is closed; the thunderous maledictions of Victor Hugo now raise a smile. As the story falls back into history, and under the weight of his tragic destiny, the Emperor’s figure is beginning to assume that sort of mournful nobility which fate confers on its august victims; in the long run that disarms the bitterest critics, and they speak only in terms of pity. In one of the dramas of Æschylus—I have forgotten which—there is a very beautiful conception of the Eumenides themselves as ceasing to be inexorable, growing calm and kindly, even to the point of taking pity on the poor mortals whom



EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

Drawn and engraved by Alfred Cornilliet
Printed by Alfred Chardon, Paris



NAPOLÉON III

Painted by Alfred de Dreux, lithograph by Emile Lassalle

they have been pursuing most relentlessly. . . . However it may be, people nowadays are almost unanimous in recognizing that the mistakes of Napoleon III always originated in a generous principle."

With abrupt vivacity she interrupted me:

"What do you call the Emperor's mistakes?"

"I mean those unfortunate experiments from which he would certainly have abstained had he gauged their consequences."

With head erect she answered me, in a strident voice that struck each syllable like a hammer-blow:

"Listen to what I say, sir. We made one mistake, and one only: we ought not to have hoisted the flag of the principle of nationality. It was that, and that alone, which was our undoing. The whole disaster sprang from that!"

"And disaster has not ceased to spring from it!"

Suddenly calm again, she leaned towards me slightly, with her hands crossed on her lap, and asked me:

"What do you think of the Second of December? Be quite frank. Talk to me without any hedging."

"I am loyally attached to the Republic, since I

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serve it today, and tomorrow, perhaps, shall have the honor of representing it abroad. But I do not condemn the *coup d'état* of 1851, not, at least, from a political point of view. What I mean, madame, is this. . . . History can show us that sometimes in the life of a people there arise circumstances of deep gravity, hours of mortal peril, when principles are bound to yield to national necessities. Machiavelli stated the case unmistakably clearly: 'A wise mind will never condemn a man for the extraordinary acts to which he has been forced in order to save his country. When the safety of the country itself is at stake, there must be no regard for justice or injustice, for pity or cruelty, for glory or shame: the sole inspiration must proceed from the demands of circumstance.' And this is why every party, monarchist, republican or bonapartist, has *coups d'état* on their conscience. But what I do reprobate, what seems to me preordained to checkmating in the ultimate issue, is the transformation of this extreme measure of public safety into a system of government. Dictatorship is like all heroic remedies: if its application is prolonged, it becomes calamitous."

"*Calamitous!* The Second Empire may have

ended deplorably, but it nevertheless gave France long years of prosperity and renown! But go on, sir, and above all, tell me everything that is in your mind. I appreciate nothing so much as sincerity."

"Since Your Majesty permits me, I shall carry my reflections to their very end. I condemn dictatorship, considered as an enduring régime, for two main reasons. Firstly, because it forces the dictator to maintain a policy of magnificence and prestige, a theatrical policy. All the responsibilities of power are centered in himself, and so it is he alone who must bear the blame which the country will lay upon him for all the mortifications and misfortunes, the difficulties and accidents, which habitually befall every people. Thus the great man who sets himself up as permanent savior of his country is forced to be always able, always clear-sighted, always prudent, always competent, always happy; he condemns himself to infallibility, for nothing will be forgiven him. . . . And my second ground is that dictatorship is an absolutely individual achievement, and consequently it is impermanent. The higher the dictator is raised in the admiration of his compatriots, the more alarming is the void he leaves behind

him: if it is not a precipice, it is a desert. . . . In a word, I may not condemn the Second of December, but I disapprove of the governmental régime which followed it."

She nodded her head two or three times and gave a faint smile:

"I am perhaps not so far from your opinion as you may think. My husband and I often discussed this agonizing problem. I said to him one day: 'The tragic thing in a *coup d'état* is that it amounts to making a pact with good fortune . . . !' And another time, seeing him absorbed in a somber brooding, the subject of which I could guess, I felt impelled to remark: 'The Second of December is like a shirt of Nessus on your back!' And he answered, 'It is never out of my thoughts.'"

"How he must have suffered, then, in the last years of his reign!"

"He suffered all the more because he never opened his heart to anyone and uttered no recrimination against anyone."

There was a thoughtful silence. She came out of it abruptly with a flash in her eyes, and darted these words to me in a resolute tone:

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"If the Second of December strikes you as excusable, since it was necessary, then you must also excuse the war of 1870; for it was not only necessary, it was preordained."

"Alas, madame, I cannot conscientiously agree to that opinion. Allow me to refrain from fuller explanation."

"No, speak! I am opening my heart with you so freely that you cannot be grudging with your candor."

"Well, madame, I believe that our disasters in 1870 will always lie heavy on the Second Empire, for it was our policy of 1859 and 1866 that made them inevitable. Yes, the explosion was preordained; but it was he who laid the train. Solferino, Sadowa, and Sedan are the logical links of one and the same chain; German unity is only the corollary of Italian unity. And I doubt whether on this point the verdict of history will ever be revised."

"You do not even grant extenuating circumstances?"

"How should I refuse them? In any national catastrophe, however heavy individual responsibilities may appear, one has always to reckon with the

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enigmatic influences of occult forces and the deceptive rôle of chance. I have often pondered that reflection of Joseph de Maistre: 'How often were the men who are regarded as the immediate authors of wars dragged forward by circumstances! Never more clearly than in these crises does man perceive the feebleness of his own spirit, and the ineluctable power of the mysterious laws which govern the world.' "

She made a dejected gesture, and then:

"But grant me this, that under our reign France did know times of splendor, a joyousness and pride in existence which she knows no more. . . . I do not mean to be unfair towards the Republic. In spite of all that displeases me, all that shocks me in the Republic, I recognize her solid merits. She can count among her statesmen some excellent patriots who would have been an honor to any régime. Think of M. Jules Ferry.¹ I did not like him, I could not like him by reason of his aggressive anti-clericalism; but I respect and admire him profoundly, for it is to his untiring energy that France owes Tunis and Tonkin. I try, you see, to judge

¹ See Biographical Notes.

the Republic impartially. . . . But nevertheless, one thing that I do not pardon is her lack of grandeur, the paltry figure that she cuts in foreign eyes. People no longer seem able to speak in the name of France; they always seem to be afraid or apologetic. What a contrast to the fascinating brilliance and proud speech of our diplomacy! You cannot imagine how superb the tone of the Emperor's expression was. And everywhere, of course, in London, in St. Petersburg, in Berlin, in Rome, in Vienna, his slightest word made the most striking impression. No other sovereign could speak in that tone!"

I agreed . . . with reserve. The Empress noticed this, and instantly flashed the question:

"What is at the back of your mind? I don't like mental reservations."

Whereupon I did my best to show her, using the necessary euphemisms, that one of the Empire's most dangerous errors had always been that excessive raising of the voice, coupled with the striking of theatrical attitudes. For instance, Napoleon III's bellicose speech at Auxerre a few weeks before Sadowa, fulminating anathemas against the treaties of 1815, fostered throughout France an illusion that

he was going to profit by the Austro-German crisis to conquer the Rhineland provinces. From this arose the sense of bitterness and humiliation which overcame the best minds when it was seen that no territorial annexation of ours counterbalanced the unbounded growth of Prussia. And again, that arrogant apostrophe of Rouher,¹ after Mentana: "We shall never allow Italy to take possession of Rome . . . no, *never!*" Three years later, on the morrow of Froeschwiller and the eve of Sedan, this peremptory veto lost us the Italian alliance. And a third instance was that lofty declaration of the Duc de Gramont in the Legislative Body, on July 6, 1870: "We shall not suffer a foreign power to set one of her princes upon the throne of Charles the Fifth. In any such event we should know how to carry out our duty with neither hesitation nor weakness. . . ." By this trumpeting rodомontade the Imperial government cut all its lines of retreat, from the first moment, and flung away every possibility of negotiation; and war was quick to follow. I concluded:

"In politics, arrogance is always a bad card to play. I shall go further and say that pride is per-

¹ See Biographical Notes.

missible only in proportion as one is capable of upholding it by force of arms. There is no more important maxim for the statesman than the Latin aphorism *Quid valeant humeri, quid ferre recusent?* (What are our shoulders strong enough to bear? Just when will the risk of collapse come?) Bismarck himself, under the humiliation of Olmütz, did not kick against the pricks. Although he was then only a private parliamentarian, he insisted with all his strength that Prussia should swallow in silence The Austrian slap in the face, because she was not ready to wage a war. And did Prussia lose anything by that postponement of her revenge? And another example, a quite recent one: Fashoda. I would urge that M. Delcassé did us a great service in not pushing our controversy with England to the last extremities, as the effective of our squadrons was not enough to let us engage in the contest to advantage. Very few people know what he suffered in having to bow to the British claims. But when I see today how Anglo-French relations have developed, when I reflect on all the hopes we may base on the *entente cordiale* between the two countries, I consider that M. Delcassé was altogether right,

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four years ago, in suiting his gestures to our possibilities of action."

The Empress interrupted me with a mischievous smile and laid a hand on my arm.

"Take care," she said. "You will be converting me to the Republic!"

And then, glancing towards her clock, which had just struck five, she gave her friendly dismissal:

"You will come again, won't you?"

III

The Empress and the Vatican. Pius IX and Leo XIII.—Confidential message to the government of the Republic.—The question of alliances in 1870.—Prince Napoleon's accusation: "the maintenance of the temporal power has cost us Alsace and Lorraine."

S A T U R D A Y , J U L Y 1 8 , 1 9 0 3

THE health of Princess Mathilde¹ has been causing such anxiety to her entourage that Prince Louis, Princess Clotilde, and the Empress Eugénie have hurried without delay to Saint-Gratien.

Today, the Princess's condition having improved, the Empress sent a request that I should come and see her, "if possible this very afternoon, as she would like to have a confidential talk on a matter of moment."

I presented myself at the Hôtel Continental about four o'clock.

The Empress had arrived from Saint-Gratien, and first of all reassured me in regard to her cousin.

¹ See Biographical Notes.

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She then pressed me with questions about the health of Leo XIII.

"For a week now," she said, "the Pope has been falsifying all that his doctors foretell. He is believed to be at death's door; suddenly he recovers his strength. Three days ago he seemed to be convalescent; today, they no longer have any hope of saving him. What will he be doing tomorrow?"

She then assumed her air of queenly dignity and said:

"Now, this is why I asked you to come: I have a secret to confide in you, one which I shall allow you to convey to the President of the Republic and to your Minister, but to them alone. Can you give me your word that they, on their side, will let it go no further?"

"I cannot give any formal assurance in that regard, as I am in total ignorance of what Your Majesty proposes to tell me; but I have no hesitation in giving my word for the discretion of President Loubet and M. Delcassé, unless any superior duty forbids them to keep silence."

"Very well. That is all I need. It is about Pope Leo XIII that I have something to tell you. . . .

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For a long time past I have had a very great desire to know this noble, this ideal, figure of a Roman pontiff, one of the finest to be found in all the annals of the Church. What generosity of mind! What a deep and subtle intelligence! Leo XIII has all the virtues of Pius IX . . . and everything that Pius IX lacked. How often I used to say to myself: 'Ah, if only the Emperor had had to deal with Leo XIII and not with Pius IX!' And I was anxious not to let him die before I could kneel before him. Accordingly, about the end of last month I had my yacht brought to Cap Martin, and on the pretext of a cruise I set off for Civita-Vecchia. Thence I went to Rome *incognito*. I chose one of the most modest hotels, and so that my journey should be quite unknown I sent my yacht on to Naples, after making the newspapers announce that I had not landed. Next day I requested an audience of the Pope, and remained cloistered in my hotel until I should receive a reply from the Vatican. The reply reached me in the shape of a French cardinal,¹ who said: 'The Holy Father is extremely sorry, but he is unable to receive Your Majesty.'—'And why

¹ I have reason to think that it was Cardinal Mathieu.

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. . . ? Is he perhaps less well?'—'On the contrary, he is much better. What prevents him from receiving Your Majesty is the fact that in 1876 Your Majesty entered the doors of the Quirinal to pay a visit to Prince Humbert and Princess Margarita. And any Catholic Majesty who has entered the doors of the Quirinal is excluded forever from the Vatican.' I made him repeat those last words, and then my anger broke bounds: 'I have been forbidden entry to the Vatican! I! I! After all that the Emperor and I did together for the Holy See! Is Leo XIII not aware that Pius IX was my son's godfather? Go and tell him from me that I protest against his decision, and beg him to withdraw it: it would be a most painful affront to me.' But the cardinal remained inflexible. 'No, madame, the Holy Father's decision is irrevocable, and he particularly advised me to convey it to you as such. . . .'

"I was no longer angry," she continued, "I was stupefied, I was dumfounded. . . . When I regained control of myself I tried to move the cardinal by reasoning: 'This visit I paid to the Quirinal with my son, twenty-seven years ago—*twenty-seven years ago!*—cannot really be brought as an objection

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against me. We had first been to bow down before Pius IX, who had received us with sovereign honors. King Victor Emmanuel was not in Rome; it was in Florence, at the Pitti Palace, that we saw him. At the Quirinal there were only Prince Humbert and Princess Margarita, and we could not in decency ignore them!’ The cardinal continued: ‘No, madame. Your Majesty ought not to have crossed the door of the Quirinal.’—‘Your Eminence must admit that if I did commit a fault, it was a very venial one. . . . After all my woes, have I no claim on the Holy Father’s indulgence?’—‘The Holy Father has grave and immediate reasons for showing himself inflexible towards Your Majesty, and has authorized me to reveal them to you. We are aware that Victor Emmanuel III will soon be going to Paris, and that the President of the Republic will return his visit at Rome. The Holy Father will view the presence of M. Loubet in the Quirinal as a grave affront, and will refuse to receive him. That is why he cannot let himself create even the semblance of a precedent which, in this case or in any similar case, might possibly be urged against him.’—‘Then this will be certain rupture between France and the Holy

See?'—'Yes, madame, it will be a rupture.' And then something extraordinary came over me; figuring myself to be still on the throne, I continued the discussion just as if it were my task to plead the French cause: 'Why this intransigent attitude of the Holy See? After all, M. Loubet is not a monarch by divine right; he is not the heir of a long religious tradition. He is the elected and temporary head of a democratic state, and is not, therefore, as regards the Roman Court, in the same moral status as the Emperor of Austria, who is an "Apostolic Majesty," or the King of Spain, who is a "Catholic Majesty," or the King of Portugal, who is a "Most Faithful Majesty." . . . And since the King of Italy is shortly to come to Paris, M. Loubet will be obliged to return his visit at Rome. How, on what pretext, could he avoid doing so? But let me suppose that, before leaving Rome, he will show his deference to the supreme head of the Church by requesting to offer his homage. If the Vatican's doors remain closed to him, it is the Pope alone who will have to bear the responsibility. . . . And finally, how will you make it plain to the world that the Sovereign Pontiff forbids access to his palace to the

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head of the French nation, and at the same time shows no repugnance to receiving there heretical monarchs, like the King of England and the German Emperor? No, not even in Catholic circles could so paradoxical a position be explained away. . . .’ Once off the leash, I went on and went on! And the poor cardinal listened to me with an air of discomfiture, saying over and over again in low tones, ‘The Holy Father has weighed all the arguments, and they have only confirmed him in his decision, which is irrevocable—quite irrevocable.’ And that was his last word.”

With a sigh she went on:

“It seemed to me that the President of the Republic and M. Delcassé would be interested to know of this incident, which has been so painful to me. But you understand why I ask their absolute secrecy. Think of the shame I should feel if the newspapers gave out the news that the Pope had refused me access to the Vatican . . . refused *me!*”

After warmly thanking the Empress for her confidence, I said to her:

“This decision that was conveyed to you saddens me more than it surprises me. All our information

goes to show that the Holy See will not recognize the visit of the President of the Republic to the King of Italy. Leo XIII is no less impervious in this respect than Pius IX would have been. The other day our ambassador, the extremely clever Nisard, received a peremptory note from Cardinal Rampolla informing him that 'a visit of the President of the Republic to the Quirinal would be regarded by the Holy Father as an affront, not only to the rights of the Holy See, but also to His August Person itself.' And to all our arguments and all our searchings for some arranged compromise, the same argument was put forward, namely, that the fact of a visit being paid by the head of a Catholic nation, as the President of the French Republic is, to the spoliator of the Pope, in the very palace which was formerly the abode of the sovereign Pontiffs, implies a grave insult to the supreme head of the Faith, and a criminal blow at the right which that head maintains, now and always, of claiming his unfettered independence for the good of the Catholic peoples and the dignity of the Roman Church."

"And what does M. Delcassé reply to that?"

"He is not very much impressed by these theo-

retic protests of the Vatican Court, seeing in them mainly doctrinal affirmations, the old axioms of the temporal power. Recently he said to me: 'History shows us that although the Roman Court has never yielded on principles, it has certainly never declined practical compromises. Pope Leo XIII, in fact, with all his wisdom and all his affection for France, will be loath to end his reign in a breach with France. . . . It is thirty years now since the House of Savoy was installed in Rome, and since the whole of Europe recognized the accomplished fact. The Holy See itself has recognized it implicitly, since it allows the Catholic powers to maintain an ambassador to the Quirinal at the same time as one to the Vatican. You will see that it will all end in some arrangement being made. . . .' And as M. Delcassé has a supple mind and maneuvers with remarkable ingenuity, he can see before us a whole sequence of expedients which will perhaps be successful . . . if Pope Leo XIII is still there at the decisive moment." ¹

¹ M. Delcassé was wrong only in the order of time. Seventeen years later, the Holy See was desirous of renewing diplomatic relations with France, and spontaneously dropped its inflexibility of doctrine. The encyclical *Pacem Dei*, of May 23, 1920, abro-

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"You have a great admiration for M. Delcassé?"

"Yes. . . . In certain respects he reminds me of Mazarin."

"Go and convey my confidence to him quickly. I hope to see you again before I leave for Farnborough; I am thinking of spending three or four days in Paris."

Returning to the Quai d'Orsay, I told Delcassé of my interview with the Empress. While I spoke his face clouded, and his features twitched in that crabbed grimace which is the sign of his being keenly vexed.

"That is bad!" he said. "Very bad! What is wrong with them at the Vatican? Are they mad? The quarrel between the Holy See and the House of Savoy is no concern of ours. Italy is henceforward a great power, holding a brilliant rank in the world, and it depends on us whether she will be a valuable ally or a redoubtable foe in the event of a vast European conflict. You recall what King gated the old veto. It was in this way that the King of the Belgians, Albert I, was able to be received at the Vatican by Pope Pius XI on March 28, 1922, and the King of Spain, Alphonso XIII, on November 19, 1923.



THE PRINCE IMPERIAL

After the painting belonging to the Empress
Painted by Ad. Yvon, lithograph by Soulange Teissier



FLY-LEAF OF "THE IMITATION OF CHRIST" GIVEN TO THE PRINCE IMPERIAL BY EMPRESS EUGÉNIE, WITH THIS NOTE IN HER HAND:

"Chaque fois que tu liras ce livre, ce sera une pensée pour ta mère. Eugénie."
 ("Each time you read this book, it will represent a thought of your mother.")
 Under this note a scapular.

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Victor Emmanuel lately said to Barrère: 'M. Loubet's visit to Rome will be a significant event; it will exert an enormous influence on the future relations of both our countries. . . .' Are we going to lose forever the chance of an Italian alliance, simply in order to comply with the outmoded claims of the Holy See?

"We already lost that chance once, in 1870: it was the claims of the Roman theocracy that deprived us of the Italian alliance on the eve of Sedan.

"The lesson of 1870 ought to be carved on the walls of this office, so that ministers of foreign affairs should recite it like a breviary every day!"

He then charged me to go at once and convey the Empress's confidence to the President of the Republic. And as I rose to go, he said, further:

"It was very good, what your august friend did . . . very good indeed! Don't you think I ought to go and thank her myself?"

"She would certainly be deeply touched, but I think it is impossible. The Empress has her apartments at the Hôtel Continental and her slightest action is spied upon by the journalists. Well, you could not go there secretly; you would be recognized

at once, and next day it would be the story of every newspaper."

"And what could they say, the newspapers?"

"I can see even now the article in the *Libre Pa-
role*: 'The Judæo-Bonapartist plot which we have
so long denounced to our readers is on the eve of
coming to a head. One of the highest personages
of the Republic has recently had private meetings
with the Empress Eugénie'—and so on and so forth.
As you will not be able to divulge the true motive
of your visit, it will appear suspect. Your col-
leagues themselves will blame you. And I would
add that such a scandal would deprive the Empress
herself of the last comfort remaining to her, that of
living in Paris for a few weeks every year. . . . So
this is what I suggest to you. I shall go to see the
Empress on your behalf, and say to her: 'M. Del-
cassé has been so deeply touched by your confidence
that he wished to come to thank you himself; he re-
frains only from his scruple against disturbing the
solitude and reserve which he knows you lay upon
yourself.'"

He reflected for a moment, bit his lips once or

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twice, as he does when he is going to make an important decision, and then said:

"You have not persuaded me at all. I very much want to thank the Empress myself. . . . However, we shall talk of that again tomorrow morning. Night brings counsel. Go to the Elysée at once."

Half an hour later I was received by the President of the Republic. M. Loubet showed himself to be no less affected than Delcassé by the Empress's story.

"Do you know," he said in conclusion, "what strikes me as the most serious point in this episode? It is the fact that Pope Leo XIII is dying, and that if the Vatican Court is taking up so intransigent a position at this time of day, it is obviously with the intention of having the upper hand with the new Pope. . . . I have always thought that my journey to Rome would have terrible difficulties in store for us. I am horrified at the breach between France and the Holy See. . . . And yet I must go to Rome; it is the *sine qua non* of the Italian alliance."

I quoted to him Cardinal de Retz's admirable saying: "The statesman's peculiar quality is to know how to choose between great inconveniences."

Before taking leave of me, he said:

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"I beg you to call on the Empress tomorrow to offer her my homage and my thanks."

SUNDAY, JULY 19, 1903

AT HALF PAST NINE, received by Delcassé. When he had heard my account of the step I took at the Elysée, he asked me:

"Have you thought over my question of yesterday?"

"I have, sir; and night has confirmed me in the view I submitted to you. A visit of yours to the Empress would expose you to vexatious attacks which might well lead to an interpellation in the Chamber. I cannot try too hard to dissuade you from this visit."

"Well, night has confirmed me in my opinion also! I wish to thank the Empress myself. Go and ask her to grant me an audience."

At quarter past ten the faithful Piétri introduced me to her presence. She was standing up, wearing her hat and carrying her prayer-book; she was making ready to go to Mass. I said to her:

"The President of the Republic, to whom I re-

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ported our conversation, has charged me to offer Your Majesty his homage and his thanks."

"I accept both with gratitude."

"As for the Minister for Foreign Affairs, it is his desire to himself show you how deeply touched he is by your confidence; he accordingly begs Your Majesty to arrange an audience for him."

She looked at me for an instant stupefied, her head trembling. Then, very dignified, very lofty, she answered:

"I am deeply moved by the request of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Coming from him, it does not astonish me: it accords with his patriotism and courage, and magnifies and honors him in my eyes. But his intention is enough. Kindly tell him that I consider his visit as paid. . . . There are some riddles it is better not to offer to public opinion."

And then taking me by the hand, she led me over towards the open window of the drawing-room, opposite the Tuileries. For a few seconds her eyes wandered over the marvelous garden, which the dazzling sun was bathing in golden purple. After a long silence, which I divined to be pregnant with great memories, she resumed in a broken voice:

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"If I was able the other day to render a service to the French government, I am delighted to have done so. . . . Since the days when I lived over *there* I have never had the chance of doing anything for France. . . . I cannot keep you longer today! I am going to hear Mass at Saint-Roch. But I hope you will come back one day soon."

We agreed upon next Wednesday, July 22nd, at five o'clock in the evening.

W E D N E S D A Y , J U L Y 2 2 , 1 9 0 3

POPE LEO XIII died the day before yesterday, and it was of him that the Empress spoke to me at the first. In spite of the painful memory lingering from her last visit to Rome, she once more expressed her admiration for the great mind, "the sublime and sacred light," which has just been extinguished. She then asked me:

"What figure do you think he will leave in history?"

"One of the loftiest and most original of all the Papacy. On the one hand, he was a great theologian; he restored the scholasticism of St. Thomas to a place of honor. On the other, he showed surpris-

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ing boldness of thought in his grasp of the general trend of human affairs, the irresistible changes which are evolving in all modern society. Even in the time of Gregory VII, of Innocent III, of Sixtus V, the renown of the Pontiff's throne, 'the throne of thrones,' as men used to say, did not gleam more splendidly."

From Leo XIII our conversation naturally turned back to Pius IX and to the deplorable Roman question which weighed so heavily on the reign of Napoleon III.

To begin with, the Empress laid down this declaration of principles, and did so in a spirited tone:

"Whatever may have been said, I have never been a clerical. . . . God has granted me the grace of faith, a full, abundant, and constant faith, which has never felt the fingers of doubt. I am a believer to the roots of my being. My whole moral person is so deeply impregnated with Catholicism that I simply cannot conceive myself as a non-Catholic, any more than I could conceive myself a dweller in another planet. So I have always been punctilious in the fulfillment of my religious duties. But though I am keenly alive to the rites and pomps of the

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Church, I do not consider myself devout: I am pious, and that is not the same thing. And if you accept my definition of clericalism, I am still farther from being a clerical myself; for it is the interference of the clergy in politics to the point of abuse. . . . In any case, were there any priests in my entourage? Not one! I frequented them solely for my spiritual edification or my private consolation and in the secrecy of my oratory. I had every right, had I not? Never in my time did the Tuileries see that ceaseless coming and going of cassocks which used to be seen there, for instance, in the reign of Charles X. I say it again, in my day there was no clericalism at the Tuileries."

"Does Your Majesty also reject the charge of ultramontane tendencies?"

She fired up:

"I was not an ultramontane! But there again one must define."

And she then expounded her views on the doctrine of the Roman pontificate, which I summarise thus: firstly, that the Bishop of Rome, being God's instrument on earth, stands in need of visible authority and territorial power for the fulfilling of his

divine mission; secondly, that without the temporal power the Catholic conception of the Church cannot achieve its integral realization; and thirdly, that under the reigns of Pius IX and Napoleon III the honor of France was pledged to uphold the Papal States.

After this exposition, with its sober and strong dialectic, she concluded:

"As regards the relations of the French clergy with the Roman jurisdiction, I was something of a Gallican—or at least, I was not shocked by Gallikanism. The ideas of Mgr. Darboy, the Archbishop of Paris, whom Pius IX never consented to make a cardinal, found a good deal of favor with me."

"If I understand you correctly, you inclined to Gallicanism rather in the way that Madame de Sévigné inclined to Jansenism?"

She burst into a laugh:

"So I have at least that in common with Madame de Sévigné! How fortunate! I have always taken such delight in the delicious marquise!"

"May I now ask, madame, what truth there is in that accusation formulated by Prince Napoleon?"¹

¹ See Biographical Notes.

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'It was the occupation of Rome,' he said, 'which caused the disasters of 1870; the maintenance of the temporal power has cost us Alsace and Lorraine.'"

"Prince Napoleon, did you say? He hated the Emperor. He never forgave him for his incarnation of the Napoleonic idea and his restoration of the Empire. And as for myself, he loathed me because I brought the Prince Imperial into the world and so barred his road to the throne. Things reached such a point that one evening at Compiègne, at a great dinner on my birthday, he refused to drink to my health! He had a remarkable intelligence, but was consumed with envy and pride. At times he was positively carried away by fury; he raved, he foamed, he became dæmonic! And so one must always bear in mind these spites and hatreds of his in estimating his judgments on the Second Empire. . . . But let us come to facts. I shall tell you exactly what occurred in 1870 in this matter of the Italian alliance; it all came back to me lately, with a tightening of the heartstrings, when I arrived on my yacht at Civita-Vecchia. You remember that for about two years, when the conflict between France and Prussia was obviously inevitable, the

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Emperor had been trying to conclude an alliance with Austria and Italy. But the basis of this 'Triple Alliance' had remained only a sketch, because it had been impossible to reach an understanding on the question of the temporal power of the Papacy. Italy was anxious that we should recognize her right of occupying the Papal States, and my husband believed that he would sully his honor in thus sanctioning the spoliation of the Pope. But the negotiations had been carried on in such a confident spirit, and Metternich¹ and Nigra¹ had lavished such fine words on us, that neither the Emperor nor I myself had any doubt that the three powers would reach an agreement, spontaneous and speedy, had not war broken out unexpectedly. . . . In the July of 1870, as soon as the crisis showed itself, the Duc de Gramont¹ reopened the negotiations with the cabinets of Florence and Vienna. But this time also agreement proved impossible, because Victor Emmanuel, or rather Visconti Venosa, was obstinate in his claim, as a *sine qua non*, to the right of occupying Rome. I tell you again that this was asking us to subscribe

¹ See Biographical Notes.

to a sacrilegious act of robbery, and not the most glorious of victories could have absolved us of it. No alliance will balance an infamy! And that is why I so warmly approved Gramont for his reply to the Italian government: 'If France is to defend her honor on the Rhine, it will not be to profane it on the Tiber!' "

I hazarded an objection:

"Nevertheless, His Apostolic Majesty, the Emperor Francis Joseph, King of Jerusalem, *et cetera*, advised us, nay urged us, to support this sacrilegious robbery."

"It was not the honor of Austria that was intrusted to our keeping; it was the honor of France! But let me go on. During the last days of July, the Council of Ministers, over which I presided as Regent, had to give a definite pronouncement on the Roman question. The Emperor was at Metz, in consternation at the horrifying revelations which were reaching him hourly: shortage of man-power, delays in mobilization, breakdowns of transport, blockage on the railways, deficits in stores and arsenals, conflicts between staffs and administrative services, quarrels between generals, and so on and so on. . . . All his

plans of strategy were upset by these, and he had to abandon the shattering offensive which he calculated would rally the southern states to our side; he was then to see the whole of Germany, a million men, rising solid before him. Moreover, the fatigues of traveling and command had intensified his physical sufferings; several times he had been seen hurriedly taking refuge in his room and flinging himself, panting for breath, on his bed! Things being so, I judged it better that we should go to the extreme limit of possible concessions to gain the alliance of Austria and Italy. When I opened the sitting of the Council by broaching the Roman question, all the Ministers gazed at me with anxiety. I said to them: 'The war is assuming an exceedingly stern and dangerous form. Tomorrow our very independence as a nation may be threatened. The military coöperation of Austria and Italy would be an absolute guaranty of our victory, but Austria will not move if Italy refuses to do so. We must ask ourselves, therefore, what is the maximum of honorable concessions which we could offer Italy. In my view this maximum would be the withdrawal of our troops from Civita-Vecchia, provided that the cabinet of Flor-

ence gives us in return a solemn promise to respect the territories of the Church, as it is already pledged to do by the convention of September 15, 1864. . . . I shall not even mention the abandonment of Rome to the Italians: that would be a felony, an apostasy. . . .' All the Ministers rallied to my proposal, and I sincerely believed that on this fresh basis the negotiations would not fail to reach their conclusion. . . . But on August 6th came the double disaster of Froeschwiller and Forbach. Immediately Italy and Austria showed their hands, and withdrew. About August 20th Prince Napoleon left for Florence, and Victor Emmanuel had the face to say to him: 'To enter upon war, I should need more than a month. Now, the fate of France will be settled before a month is over. . . .' And that is how we were rewarded for Magenta and Solferino!"

Breathless and choking, the Empress paused for a moment. I went on:

"Alas, madame, one is never in a good position for negotiating an alliance when one has just sustained a defeat—I should say rather, *two* defeats!"

She continued in her turn, authoritatively:

"So you see, then, that if we did not obtain the

aid of Italy during August, 1870, it was solely because luck had twice declared against us."

In drawing forth these biting memories from the grave of her memory, the unhappy woman was so deeply moved, and her wrinkled face twitched so painfully, that pity made me acquiesce in what she said. But now I rectify them slightly, *in petto*, for matters did not altogether move in that way, at least in the final period of the negotiations. On August 1st, that is to say, five days before Froeschwiller and Forbach—Count Vimercati, Cavour's former agent and Victor Emmanuel's confidant, arrived at general headquarters in Metz to lay before the Emperor the definitive text of a treaty of alliance with Austria and Italy. All that this text lacked was the signature of Napoleon III; but he refused it because one clause of the treaty stipulated that the Italian government reserved the right of settling the Roman question as its own interests demanded.

Must we then admit the truth of Prince Napoleon's accusation against the Second Empire, that "the maintenance of the temporal power has cost us Alsace and Lorraine"?

A question of chronology seems to me to dominate

the problem. When Napoleon III, on August 1, 1870, declined to sign the pact of alliance brought by Vimercati, the hour had already struck when Italy and Austria could have lent us effective support. To mobilize their troops and bring them to the scene of action, they would have needed at least fifty days. Well, in Victor Emmanuel's own phrase, the fate of France was going to be settled before those fifty days were up. On August 18th came the defeat of Saint-Privat and the blockade of the Army of the Rhine in Metz; on September 2nd, the disaster of Sedan and the capitulation of Napoleon III; on September 4th, the revolution in Paris and the crash of the Empire. In the face of so complete a catastrophe, would Austria and Italy have honored their signatures? Without a doubt they would have slipped out of their engagements on some pretext or other, for in politics it is very rare that respect for a pledge is carried to the point of self-sacrifice. And so, if Napoleon had abandoned Rome to the Italians in a concession given *in extremis*, France would have gained nothing.

But considered in relation to an earlier date, Prince Napoleon's accusation is undeniably true. It

was during the secret conversations of 1869 that Napoleon III committed the error of making the conclusion of an alliance, which he himself deemed essential to French security, subordinate to the maintenance of the temporal power. A sick and somnolent man, and more cloud-wrapped than ever, he then inclosed himself in impenetrable silence; he eluded all explanations; he wavered and wobbled; he would make up his mind later . . . at the last moment. He did not know that, although in emergency one can improvise a *diplomatic* alliance, one cannot improvise a *military* alliance; for the latter entails prolonged material preparations, a minutely detailed technical program, an intimate collaboration of general staffs. . . . Nevertheless, the days went by and the crisis drew near. To one of his Ministers Napoleon III confided: "I shall make war with only a handful of alliances." Yet on the 16th of July, when he declared war on Prussia, he had not one single alliance in his hand. And it was on account of the Roman question that he was thus empty-handed.

IV

Political rôle of the Empress: the example of Queen Victoria.—Presence of the Empress at the Council of Ministers. Rochefort's attacks. Violent hostility of Persigny.—Portrait of Morny.—The Liberal Empire. Was the Napoleonic régime compatible with liberty?

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1903

THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE is passing through Paris on her way to Cap Martin. She let me know through Piétri that she desired to see me this afternoon. At five o'clock I presented myself at her apartment.

Her first words, spoken with emotion, were of the fresh anxiety caused by the health of Princess Mathilde:

"This time I have no further hope of her mending, she is so feeble! Just think, she is eighty-three years old! May she at least fall peacefully asleep! May God spare her the misery of agony! A mind of true generosity is about to leave us."

After this melancholy prelude she suddenly recovered her animation, her head held high, her eyes

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alive, her voice clear and sonorous; for, after all, she is only seventy-seven!

"But now tell me things: the work of your Minister is shaping admirably! Since Edward VII's visit to Paris and M. Loubet's visit to London¹ we have moved forward a long way! And the credit for all that must certainly be granted to M. Delcassé."

The information which she owes to her relations with the English Court and English society accords exactly with the picture of the situation as we see it at the Quai d'Orsay. England is obviously happy at escaping from her isolation and at finding in France the continental support which she needs to set against the domineering claims of Germany. There is no doubt that the intrigues, sword-rattlings, and trickeries of which William has lately made excessive use have been one of the chief motives that determined the Cabinet in London to draw closer to us. Finally, it is beyond doubt that the completeness and rapidity of this political development are largely due to the personal initiatives of the King,

¹ In May, 1903, Edward VII paid a state visit to the President of the Republic, which was returned by the latter in July.

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a circumstance without precedent in the annals of the British Crown. On all of these points the information of the Empress illuminates and strengthens our own. She concluded in these words:

"Don't you think that this *rapprochement* will find its logical conclusion in an alliance?"

"An alliance, no. The English only make an alliance under the direct threat of a war. But I presume that both governments will soon interpret their *entente* with precise and contractual formulæ."

"Will there be any question there of Morocco?"

"Yes."

"Of Spain?"

"Yes."

"Of Egypt?"

"Yes."

"Of Siam?"

"Yes."

"Of Newfoundland?"

"Yes."

"And what else?"

"Of everything."

"Marvelous! One last question, so long as you do not think me too indiscreet. What is Russia going



EMPRESS EUGÉNIE AND HER SON
Painted by Desandre, lithograph by Bettanier



Dessin original de Sébastien Cornu
représentant l'Empereur Napoléon III, avant la présidence
Provient de l'album de Madame Cornu.

ORIGINAL DRAWING BY SÉBASTIEN CORNU OF NAPOLEON III BE-
FORE HE BECAME PRESIDENT

From Madame Cornu's album

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to think at seeing us embark on so intimate a liaison with her great hereditary enemy?"

"Russia? M. Delcassé has hidden nothing of his activity in London from her. He put her *au courant* from the first day. What's more, instead of being restless and planning to take counter-assurances from Berlin's side, as certain newspapers have asserted, she is counting on our aid to settle, in her own turn, her old questions of dispute with England. . . . Never have the relations of the two allies been more cordial."

"That is what the Empress Maria Fedorovna was telling me recently; but I could scarcely believe it."

For an instant she remained silent, breathing deeply, with a light in her face.

"I can see that Your Majesty is still a passionate lover of politics."

"Oh yes, passionate!"

"About what time did the interest begin?"

"Even as a girl I had a taste for politics. It is one that I inherited from my mother, in whose house I used to hear statesmen, diplomats, generals, publicists, orating from morning till night. You know how high political feeling ran in Spain in the time

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of Queen Christina, of Narvaez, Espartero, and Isturitz, and especially during the alarming crisis of the 'Spanish marriages.' But the domestic kitchen of the parties, their rivalries and tricks and trafficking, left me quite indifferent. What stirred me was the broad questions, where national interest, national prestige, were at stake. It was even through this that I first felt drawn to my future husband, before I ever knew him personally. His chivalrous follies at Strasbourg and Boulogne, his heroic bearing before the Chamber of Peers, the halo of martyrdom set on his brow by the captivity at Ham, his proud proclamations in 1848, the noble accents of his patriotism—all these things exalted me. Moreover, I was prepared for it from childhood by Stendhal, who used often to visit my mother. He had intoxicated us, my sister and myself, with his Napoleonic enthusiasms. . . . And then after I had become Empress, I strove as hard as I could to understand the great questions which occupied the Emperor. I made him explain them to me, I took notes, I read everything that could instruct me or enlighten me. Diplomacy interested me most of all. I knew no keener pleasure than in conversing with Cowley,

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Granville, Clarendon, Malmesbury, Buol, Hubner, Cavour, Hatzfeldt, Orloff, and all the foreign statesmen who flocked to the Tuileries; for I assure you that about the time I am speaking of, say 1857, every single chancellery had its eyes turned continually towards the Emperor, sought to please him and draw him into its schemes: France was truly marching in the van of Europe. . . . The public judged from externals, and thought that I was busied only with elegance and fashion, with gowns and gewgaws; I was accused of being frivolous, extravagant, coquetish, giddy—I forget what all! The leaders of this wicked campaign against me would have been greatly surprised if they could have seen the notebooks in which I made daily summaries of my reading!”

As she uttered these words, something like bitter disgust twisted her lips. But she continued:

“It was in 1859 that I first intervened in the machinery of government. You will recall that during the war in Italy I held the Regency; and I give you my word that I exercised it very seriously, with full consciousness of my responsibilities, as well as of the powers of initiative that belonged to me.”

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"To what initiative does Your Majesty allude?"

"After Solferino, or, to be more exact, immediately after the entry of our troops into Milan, I drew the Emperor's attention to the danger of the unrest showing itself in Germany, and the necessity for speedy steps towards a reconciliation with Austria. Just think! Under the pressure of Prussia, the Frankfurt Diet had ordered the instant mobilization of three hundred and fifty thousand men. Once this army had been concentrated in the Rhine provinces, the Emperor could have been called upon to evacuate Lombardy, and if he had refused, French territory could have been invaded. Now, to repulse this invasion there remained to us not so many as fifty thousand men, mostly conscripts: it meant that the road to Paris lay open. I had during those days a kind of foretaste of the terrible agonies I went through in 1870. But the Emperor considered himself in honor bound by the ill-considered phrase of his proclamation, 'Italy, free to the shores of the Adriatic!' He wished to continue the war, in the hope of a prompt and decisive battle. On June 24th he was victorious at Solferino. And then, suddenly, the language of Prussia, and the armaments of the

Germanic Confederation, became so threatening that I begged my husband to think now only of France and to make peace at once. He consented to yield to my arguments, and twelve days later negotiated with Francis Joseph the convention of Villafranca—a convention for which the Italians have never forgiven him, with which many Frenchmen even have reproached him. What injustice, on both sides! For after all, that is what had to be done! We could not let France be overrun to satisfy the unbounded ambitions of the Italian people! What is your opinion?"

I approved unreservedly, for the armistice of Villafranca was indubitably one of the wisest actions of Napoleon III, the sole means of escaping the tragic consequences of a chimerical and ill-conceived enterprise. I refrained, however, from quoting to the Empress the judicious reflection of one of the warmest partisans of the Empire, a faithful friend of the Emperor, who was closely in touch with the negotiations of Villafranca—General Fluey: "Why make war if there is a risk of raising the whole of Europe against one, if one is laid open to a forced check in the moment of victory by the imminent danger of

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an invasion? What Napoleon understood after Solferino, he ought to have understood before engaging in this crusade."

The Empress then told me how, after her Regency in 1859, she never ceased to take part in the general direction of public affairs.

"It brought many attacks on my head," she said, "and, unhappily, my nerves were overstrained in consequence. And the most respectful attacks were not the least painful to me! Nothing, for instance, used to irritate me more than to hear myself denied a political sense because I was a woman. I longed to reply: 'Indeed! Women have no political sense? What about Elizabeth? Maria Teresa? Catherine II?' And after all, was there not before my eyes my close friend at Windsor, Queen Victoria? For more than twenty years she had been the personification, as noble as she was vigorous, of all the principles, all the traditions, all the tendencies of the British people."

For the sake of greater precision, I asked her:

"At what period did Your Majesty begin to sit regularly at the Council of Ministers?"

"I never sat there regularly. I was only present

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for important deliberations. It was chiefly after 1866 that I was often seen there. We were then passing through a very difficult and obscure period, from an internal as well as an external point of view; and so it was quite natural that the Emperor should wish to give me a practical initiation into high matters of state, in case I might again have to shoulder a regency. But although some of the wiser minds, like Rouher, Troplong, Billaut, Baroche¹ and La Valette, approved my presence at the council table, there were others who waged underground war against me, distorting the part I played, crediting me with ludicrous pretensions, never thinking that they were thus preparing the way for the infamous japes with which Rochefort was soon to harry me in *La Lanterne*."

As she pronounced these last words the Empress was quivering all over; and in the sudden flash of her eyes I could see the rekindled flame of old angers long quenched. After five-and-thirty years she cannot recall without a tremor the sarcasms of the terrible pamphleteer! Perhaps at that moment she remembered that caustic note: "*Yesterday Her Maj-*

¹ See Biographical Notes.

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esty the Empress presided at the Council of Ministers.—Mme. Péreire presided this morning at the administrative council of the Crédit Mobilier."

To leave her time to recover herself, I invoked a precedent which cannot have been distasteful to her.

"Every epoch, madame, and every régime, have had such men. It is almost always the courtiers who give the impulse to scandalous legends. It was not among the people, but at the Court of the Cæsars, that Suetonius collected his lubricious anecdotes. Similarly, the most abominable slanders that the revolutionary tribunal dared to formulate against Marie Antoinette had already gone the rounds of the *salons* of the Comte de Provence or the Comte d'Artois. Not long ago I was shown, by a prince of bibliophiles, a collection of pamphlets illustrated in water-color, an exquisite album produced in 1786 for the delectation of the future Charles X; it showed poor Marie Antoinette figuring in scenes of shamelessness."

Beginning to smile again, the Empress went on:

"Oh, I think I was spared that class of ignominy. But yet I shouldn't like to swear . . . ! However, to round off what we were saying just now, I should

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like to tell you what happened with Persigny¹ in 1867. From the very day of my marriage I was honored with his hatred, a venomous and besmirching hatred. He sometimes forgot himself so far as to name me 'the Spanish woman,' 'the foreigner'! Taking advantage of the distinguished services he had rendered the Napoleonic cause, he would endure nobody to come between the Emperor and himself: the Emperor and the Empire were his sole property; it was he who had invented and created them; and so he deemed himself the sole person qualified to advise the one and govern the other. It is incredible what kindness my husband needed to put up with the furies and tantrums of Persigny. Imagine a boiler which was perpetually blowing up! But a day came when the Emperor had to be severe. The circumstances were these. So far as I remember, it was in the month of November, 1867. The Emperor had caught cold hunting; he was suffering from his rheumatism and had gone to bed. I was alone with him in his room. We were talking of Mentana and the ill-timed phrase which General de Failly had inserted into his report: 'The "*chasse-*

¹ See Biographical Notes.

pots" did marvels. . . .¹ When ordering this report to be published, my husband had insisted on the deletion of this provocative phrase—after all, it was Italian breasts that had served as targets—and had asked it to be replaced with 'The *chassepots* produced a terrible effect. . . .' But Marshal Niel was bristling with pride of his new gun, and retained the original text. Whence, a hue and cry from the opposition, an overflow of invective and anathemas.

"Well, on this November day in 1867 I was reading to the Emperor the chief criticisms of the newspapers, when the cabinet usher brought him a stout sealed letter, with the superscription: *For the Emperor's hand alone, from the Duc de Persigny*. The Emperor looked at the envelope without opening it, 'Come, come!' he said to me. 'I'm sure this is more recrimination from Persigny! How wearisome he is! Look, read me this letter: I haven't the strength today.' I opened the envelope; it contained at least a dozen pages. Indeed, it was not so much a letter as a communication, or rather a long diatribe against myself, against my presence at the Council of Min-

¹ A new model of rifle.

isters, against the detestable ideas which I personified in the government and which were leading the Empire to its ruin! Decency, however, made Persigny disguise his complaints beneath pompous expressions of homage to the beauty of my person and the nobility of my mind. The prosecuting brief was no less odious. At each word I trembled with anger. My husband listened impassively. When I had finished my reading I gave rein to my indignation: 'Never again shall I set foot in the Council of Ministers, no, never! I will not expose myself to such outrage! It is too unfair, it is too humiliating!' I was off, I was off! I held myself in no longer. With quiet gentleness the Emperor kept saying to me: 'Calm yourself! This new foolishness of Persigny is of no importance. It is my opinion that your place is at the Council of Ministers, and you will not cease to sit there. It is I who am master. . . .' I knew quite well that when he assumed this affectionate tone, I could only bow. So I bowed. But to solace my own heart, I instantly wrote Persigny a pretty strong letter, which broke off relations between us. From that day he ceased to appear at court."

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From Persigny we passed on to Morny.¹ I asked the Empress:

"Could I learn Your Majesty's opinion of the Duc de Morny?"

"Tell me first what your own is."

"I greatly admire him. He possessed in a very high degree most of the qualities that make up great statesmen: he had the sense of reality and possibility; clarity, quickness, and suppleness of mind; a sober and clear-cut speech; a will that was inflexible, but without loftiness as without weakness; a marvelous coolness and dexterity in action, and an impenetrable mask; and finally, the subtle art of fascinating men and leading them. . . . Setting moral considerations aside, the Second of December was a masterpiece, and Morny was its chief executant. In preparation, opportuneness, boldness, ruse, and mystery, in vigor, methodical handling, fitness, and the perfect linking of all its springs, it is a model *coup d'état*. How far superior to the Eighteenth of Brumaire, in which lack of foresight was only equaled by clumsiness, in which Bonaparte himself lost his head! Machiavelli had unerring taste

¹ See Biographical Notes.

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in the virtuosity of conspiracy: he would have had nothing but praise for the Second of December; he would have extolled it as the true type of *bello inganno*. . . . And in M. de Morny I admire no less the diplomat. The Crimean War seemed to him a huge mistake, and he was the first to advise peace. The Russian alliance, as he conceived it during his ambassadorship at St. Petersburg, would have bridled the dangerous dreams of Napoleon III and kept them safe in the great tradition of French policy, that of Richelieu, Mazarin, Lionne, Vergennes, Talleyrand: it would have spared us the trilogy of Solferino, Sadowa, Sedan."

"I agree with all you have just said. I had much affection for M. de Morny; and the Emperor also appreciated him and was very fond of him. . . . You may guess, of course, that he often shocked my puritan sense. But there I refer only to his private life and his sentimental adventures, for I do not think he earned the doubtful reputation that surrounded him in money matters. He was too indulgent to the speculations of jobbery and the Bourse, and in his dealings with men of business he was none too scrupulous; but beyond that I will not

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go. As for the allegation that the Mexican expedition was undertaken at his prompting and for base motives, that is a calumny of which he should be entirely cleared. The improper influence of the Jecker bonds counted for nothing in our intervention in Mexico; it merely hooked itself on, exactly as you will always find villainies creeping into the noblest enterprises. Do you suppose that there was nothing but piety in the Crusades?—But to return to M. de Morny. As a man he was charming, his ease and distinction of manner perfect. This he got from his father, the Comte de Flahault, who survived him five years and was the living incarnation in my eyes of the type of old-time gentleman. It was through him that I realized all the refinement in the society of the *ancien régime*, in the matchless society of Versailles and the Trianon. Like his father, too, M. de Morny had superb courage, which he took pleasure in concealing under a mask of nonchalance and coldness. You know how admirably he bore himself at the siege of Constantine.

“And now I shall confide in you a rather curious incident in my relations with him, which used to delight my dear friend Mérimée. It was soon after

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my marriage. The Emperor had been shocked to hear that M. de Morny had given a conspicuous place in his drawing-room to a painting of Queen Hortense, a large state portrait; but not being willing to intervene himself towards causing the removal of this picture, he intrusted me with the task. Accordingly, I asked M. de Morny to come and talk with me. I feared some resistance on his part, more or less veiled by courtesy and irony. But quite the contrary: smiling docility in the happiest key. He even thanked me warmly when I said to him, 'The less you make a display of your parentage, the more you will be treated as a brother.' And in conclusion he added these words, which Mérimée thought were so characteristic of the man: 'You told me just now that by placing the portrait of Queen Hortense in my drawing-room I had hurt the Emperor's feelings. But how could that hurt his feelings . . .?' In morality, you see, he had not a very sensitive skin."

"Indeed, madame, the phrase is highly characteristic, and I can understand Mérimée's enjoyment of it. M. de Morny was talking that day as his ancestor, M. de Talleyrand, did when, as a very old man,

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feeling death drawing near, he was talking one evening with the Duchesse de Dino. She was entreating him to make his peace with God. 'Just remember,' she said to him, 'how you have scandalized the Church!'—'What! I!' he exclaimed, stupefied. 'I scandalized the Church! And what was that . . .?'"

I brought the conversation back to the field of politics.

"Does Your Majesty believe that if the Duc de Morny had not died in 1865, the Empire's internal policy would have developed more rapidly towards the constitutional régime? And that the experiment of the 'Liberal Empire' would not have been delayed so late as January 2nd, 1870?"

"I am not sure. I am not very fond of the game of retrospective hypothesis. It is so easy to refashion the past; everyone does so to suit his own fancy. Nevertheless, I shall try to enter into your thoughts. . . . What would have happened to the Empire if M. de Morny had not died in 1865? Well, frankly, I don't think that the course of events would have been much altered. The experiment of the 'Liberal Empire' was not really inaugurated by the Min-

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istry of the 2nd of January, 1870; it was done by the famous reform of January 19, 1867, whereby the Emperor gave the legislative body the right of interpellation. It was on that day that the Napoleonic régime struck out on a new path; for that day the curtain fell irrevocably on the 'authoritarian Empire' which had given France fifteen years of greatness and prosperity. I shan't conceal from you that I was deeply hurt by this. With the support of Rouher, whose judgment was so accurate, I fought tooth and nail against this resurrection of parliamentarianism. I even admit to you that I did not understand what could have brought the Emperor to decide on such a grave innovation. True, I was quite of the opinion that the Constitution of 1852 could not be maintained perpetually, and that sooner or later it would have to be slightly watered down in a democratic sense. The Emperor had often spoken to me about that. But it was his intention to bequeath to our son the task of reëstablishing in France the everyday working of public liberties in France. The Emperor did not think that he could carry this out himself, as he was the personal incarnation of the authoritarian principle, and that this

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principle was his *raison d'être*. None the less, in order not to delay this development unduly, he had taken the resolution, which he confided to me alone, to abdicate about the year 1874, when the Prince Imperial would be old enough to mount the throne. He had even fixed on the setting of our retirement: we were to live at Pau during the winter, and at Biarritz in summer. On all that we were in perfect agreement. . . . You will now understand my surprise when the startling letter of January 19, 1867, was made public. What I was then ignorant of, and only learned some months later, was that my husband's health was already causing him grave anxiety and that he no longer felt capable of bearing for very long the crushing burden of supreme power."

"And so, madame, what caused your hostility to the experiment of the 'Liberal Empire' was less a question of principle than one of opportuneness? You could not admit of the experiment under the reign of Napoleon III, although you could do so, as a gift to celebrate the accession, under that of your son?"

She hesitated before replying, and for a moment closed her eyes as if the flood of memories were bear-

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ing away her thoughts. Then very skillfully she evaded my questioning by taking up the questioning herself:

"What do you think of the conception of the 'Liberal Empire'?"

"I do not think that the Napoleonic Empire could be reconciled with the idea of liberty."

"The Napoleonic Empire not reconcilable with liberty? And why? Develop this idea. It interests me extremely."

She leaned over slightly, her elbow on the table, her chin on her hand, with her gaze rigid, as if to lose no word of what I was going to say.

As shortly as possible I put my argument before her:

"The fundamental principle of Empire is that the Emperor should govern alone, in virtue of the absolute rights which he receives from the plebiscite; he is therefore solely responsible, and the Ministers depend solely on him. In the representative system, on the other hand, the fundamental principle is that the monarch reigns but does not rule; the exercise and responsibility of power, therefore, belong solely to the Ministers. Thus, in one case the crown is

predominant; in the other, parliament. To seek to reconcile the two systems is an antinomy. A choice between the two dominants must be made. And further, one has to ask what is the essence of parliamentary control and ministerial power, when the sovereign retains the supreme prerogative of an appeal to the people without even having to consult the chambers. Practiced in such conditions, a plebiscite is only a legalized Second of December. . . .”

Silent and motionless, the Empress listened to my words, only interrupting me here and there with a sign of the eyes, as if encouraging me to pursue my exposition. I accordingly did so:

“If I might venture so far, madame, I should say to Your Majesty . . .”

“Go on, go on!”

“I should say to Your Majesty that Napoleon III was less qualified than anyone else to engage upon the reconciliation of the Empire and liberty, for he believed that he was summoned by a supreme vocation, a providential decree, to uproot the heresy of parliamentarianism in France. All his instincts, his ideas, and his habits were opposed to his allowing

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the law henceforth to be dictated by Ministers dependent solely on the Chambers. He would rather have abdicated. I simply cannot picture him in active and enduring collaboration with Thiers or Buffet,¹ and still less with Grévy or Gambetta. And the proof is found in the fact that, under the Ministry of Émile Ollivier¹ in 1870, he did not cease to carry on his secret and personal policy. . . .”

When I finished my tirade, the Empress bowed her head and whispered very quickly:

“I shall not answer you. . . . You may draw what conclusions you please from my silence.”

And then, with a firmer tone again, she asked me with an air of detachment:

“Do you know Émile Ollivier?”

“Yes, slightly. I sometimes meet him at the house of a friend.”

“And what do you think of him?”

“I consider him a very honest man in private life. But to me he represents all that is most objectionable in politics: eloquence, great eloquence, in the service of ideology and infatuation.”

At that moment a servant brought the Empress a

¹ See Biographical Notes.

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visiting-card on a silver tray. She glanced at it and made an affirmative sign. And then, offering me her hand, she said:

“We must stop there for today. I am even afraid I may have kept you too long. . . . Au revoir—and don’t forget me!”

V

Princess Mathilde. Her portrait and her influence: Marguerite of Navarre.—The Mexican expedition. Responsibility of the Empress.—Psychology of Napoleon III.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 10, 1904

THE day before yesterday, at the funeral of Princess Mathilde,¹ the Empress Eugénie sent her nephew, Count Joseph Primoli, to tell me that she wished to see me.

I found her more distressed than I should have thought by the death of her cousin. She said to me:

"These are dark days I have been going through. A fresh bereavement is to me not only a fresh wound, but also the recollection, and as it were the concen-

¹ Princess Mathilde died in her house in the Rue de Berri on January 2, 1904. The funeral, at which I was present, was celebrated with great pomp at the church of Saint-Philippe du Roule on January 8th. On the previous day a private service in the church of Saint-Gratien had brought together all the surviving members of the Imperial Family, among whom were the Empress Eugénie, Princess Clotilde, Princess Lætitia, the Duchesse d'Aosta, Counts Louis and Joseph Primoli, and Prince and Princess Murat.

tration, of all my previous bereavements: it is that poignant and intense emotion that makes the Vigil of All Souls so extremely affecting . . .”

And then she spoke to me, in excellent terms, of Princess Mathilde:

“You know how different we were from each other in character, tastes, opinions—and everything else! Many a time we had quite lively skirmishes on the field of politics or religion. But I never felt her less of a trusty friend, and of a noble and very generous heart. . . . You know her only in her decline, and so you can hardly imagine how beautiful she was in the great days of the Empire: the profile of a medallion, sparkling eyes, a Venetian head of hair, and shoulders like a piece of sculpture. Her ways, her charm, her speech, everything about her was redolent of grace and wit, independence and frankness, ardor and health. . . . My husband was very fond of her. If he had married her, as he thought of doing in 1835, I don’t think they would have agreed very long. Don’t ask me why; no doubt you can guess. But from her he would take any observation, any piece of fun, or any scolding. And when she attacked him, it was with a



MEDALLION REPRESENTING THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

Gift of the Baroness d'Alexandry d'Orengiani



EMPRESS EUGÉNIE IN RIDING HABIT

By Jules David, print by Lamoureux

This engraving is from the collection of the *Moniteur de la Mode* published by
Ad. Goubaud et Cie., Paris

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freedom of speech, a hearty and spiced bluffness that made one think of Molière's domestics. . . . In her *salon* she entertained with the widest hospitality, and many were the famous men who frequented it: Sainte-Beuve, Renan, Taine, Flaubert, Théophile Gautier, the Goncourts, Alexandre Dumas, Claude Bernard, Daubrée, Pasteur, Berthelot, Gavarni, Fromentin, Hébert, Meissonier, Baudry, Carpeaux—I think that *salon* will mark a brilliant date in the history of French society. Mérimée, who also used to visit her, once said to me: 'Princess Mathilde is Marguerite of Navarre. The court of Saint-Gratien is the court of Nérac. . . .'

"I dare say Mérimée made certain reservations in his comparison, for I can see several necessary ones. But there is a remark of Brantôme's on the court of Nérac which applies exactly to Princess Mathilde's *salon*, to what gave it its chief originality and charm—I mean the truce of political disputes in a chosen circle, a circle of high elegance and culture, with its luminous center the beauty of a woman: 'Among all kinds of honorable pleasures,' said Brantôme, 'the Queen of Navarre excelled in making weapons grow rusty while wits grew bright.'"

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The Empress pursued her panegyric and lament a few minutes longer. But she was soon caught up by her tenacious love of the present, and questioned me feverishly on the grave dispute which has just arisen between Russia and Japan on the subject of Korea.

"Why do the Russians refuse to evacuate Manchuria," she asked me, "when they solemnly promised to do so in 1902? Why do they threaten the political and territorial integrity of Korea? Why don't they stop sending troops to Harbin, Port Arthur, and Vladivostok? Are Siberia and Kwangtung no longer enough for them? Do they claim rule over the Pacific Ocean? There is strong feeling against them in London; their ambitions are regarded as equally unreasonable and insolent; there is energetic support of 'the poor little Japs.' And what does M. Delcassé think? What is he doing?"

"Up to the present M. Delcassé has managed to keep the quarrel on a diplomatic basis. It is through his agency that Tokio and St. Petersburg still consent to negotiate. Naturally he keeps the British Foreign Office fully in touch with all his *démarches*. And no later than yesterday Lord Lansdowne sent

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him word that he regarded M. Delcassé as his last hope of keeping the peace."

"Will he succeed in that?"

"I doubt it. . . . There is a powerful cabal in St. Petersburg, with vast financial interests in the region of the Yalu, which will not recoil from any means of obtaining the dispatch of an ultimatum to Japan. General Kuropatkin, the Minister of War, and Count Lamsdorff, his colleague of Foreign Affairs, are visibly weak. As for the feeble Nicholas II, he falls more and more under the double-faced influence of the Emperor William, who is pushing him towards violent resolves. . . . If the bellicose tide carries him away, the crisis will not be only Asiatic, it will have grave repercussions in Europe, and the present equilibrium there will be hard to maintain."

"Does not a Russian victory seem to you very doubtful?"

"That is the prevailing opinion. But none the less, as our chief-of-staff, General Pendézec, justly said to me the other day: 'The Russian army is undeniably, even overwhelmingly, stronger than the Japanese in numbers and in material; and the outcome of the war would not be in doubt—if Russia

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and Japan were adjoining countries. But it is not in the Urals, but in Korea and Manchuria, that the operations will necessarily be staged. And so, before even sighting the enemy, the Russian army will have to be transported five thousand miles from its natural base, with one single line of communication, the Trans-Siberian Railway. And on that single line, throughout the war, they will have to be continually sending reinforcements, spare equipment, rations, and munitions. It will be a terrible problem, and one that the Russian administration is probably less able than any other to solve. What is more, you know what General Kuropatkin was recently saying to our military attaché: "I pray God to spare us this war, for it will be very long, very dangerous, and devoid of glory. . . ." And General Pendézec ended with some words which I should apologize for repeating to you: 'Before letting itself be drawn into a war in the depths of Manchuria, the Russian government would do well to remember how heavily the Mexican expedition weighed on the destiny of the Second Empire!'

At this mention of Mexico the Empress drew up her head and shoulders and threw them back, as if

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an electric shock had run up her spinal column. And in a loud voice, with glittering eyes, she said:

"Apologize . . . why? I am not ashamed of Mexico. I deplore it; but I do not blush for it . . . I am even always ready to discuss it, for it is one of the themes which injustice and calumny have most wrongly exploited against us."

Whereupon she turned to proving to me that the Mexican adventure, the origins of which are so ill-famed, was really the outcome of a truly noble plan, the realization of a political and civilizing conception of the loftiest kind:

"I swear to you that in the start of the enterprise the financial speculations, the recovery of credits, the Jecker bonds, the mines of Sonora and Sinaloa, had no share. We never even thought of them. It was much later that the jobbers and tricksters sought to profit from circumstances. But that has been seen in all the great doings of mankind, under all régimes, in all ages. Look, I was lately reading Janssen's account of the Reformation in Germany. And what did I find? I saw there the enormous rôle played in the rivalries of the Catholic princes and the Lutheran princes by the moneychangers of Frankfurt,

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Augsburg, and Nuremberg. But the Reformation is none the less one of the most moving dramas that ever stirred the conscience of Christendom. . . .”

And she then reminded me of how, even from 1846, the prisoner of Ham had dreamed of setting up in Central America a strong Latin empire which would have barred the road against the ambitions of the United States. It was on Nicaragua that he put his first choice, by reason of the facilities he would there have found for piercing a canal between the two oceans. So he had been quick to see the opportunities of a French intervention in Mexico, on the day that Juarez's dictatorship again released revolutionary passions, while at the same time the War of Secession was setting the two halves of the great neighboring republic against each other for so long a time.

When the Empress had ended her preliminary remarks, I asked her:

“At what date did the idea take definite form in Napoleon III's mind? What gave him the final and decisive impetus?”

Abruptly she answered:

“It came in 1861, at Biarritz, from myself.”

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In that trenchant statement I saw again what I have often observed in the Empress—her courageous determination to assume with pride all her proper responsibilities, however crushing they may be for her memory.

She afterward told me of the conversations which she had at Biarritz during the autumn of 1861, with a Mexican *émigré*, Don José Hidalgo, whom she had welcomed in her private circle for some years back. Their upshot was that those powers whose nationals were most numerous in Mexico—that is to say, France, England, and Spain—ought to intervene there for the restoration of order, without delay and as energetically as possible, with the support of the conservative party. Napoleon III having lent a favorable ear to this project, other *émigrés* came upon the scene—Almonte, Gutierrez, Iglesias, Mgr. Labastida, and Fr. Miranda.

It was thus that, in the shadows, a vast clerical and monarchical combination was worked out, of which France was to be the spirit and the sole instrument; for it was thought certain that English and Spanish support would be limited to the temporary occupation of certain Mexican ports. . . . So the

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vast Empire of Montezuma and Guatemotzin was to be restored in favor of a Catholic prince! But what prince would be offered the crown? They hesitated between the Duke of Modena, the Duke of Parma, the Duke of Montpensier, the Duke of Aumale. But after long and total silence, Napoleon III pronounced in favor of the Archduke Maximilian,¹ brother of Francis Joseph. The selection of this Hapsburg seemed justified by the intelligence, suppleness, and amiable qualities of which he had given proof, some years before, in the troublesome government of the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom. Further, he was married to the Princess Charlotte of Belgium, and the active influence wielded by his father-in-law, King Leopold, at the Court of St. James's, would be of value to him. The Empress concluded with these words:

"Finally, I shall not hide from you that, in my husband's thoughts, the elevation of an Austrian archduke to the throne of Mexico, would one day serve him as an argument to obtain from Francis Joseph the cession of Venice to Italy. With this turn in events, the program of 1859 would be fully real-

¹ See Biographical Notes.

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ized: Italy would henceforth be free to the shores of the Adriatic. . . . And now you know all the origins of the Mexican enterprise. I defy anyone to point to any detail that was not perfectly honorable and worthy of France."

From the start of her apologia, one question had been on the tip of my tongue, "In what way did this conspiracy of *émigrés* fit in with the interests of France?" But the Empress pressed me to take my turn of speaking:

"What is your opinion of the Mexican affair? Does my account not make any impression on you?"

And her tense gaze fixed on me.

"I admit," I said, "that, considered from the theoretical point of view, the Mexican enterprise might well have been alluring to the generous idealism of Napoleon III. But what I do not understand is that he was not immediately struck with the impossibility of success, from a practical point of view."

"Alas! We were mistaken about the resistance and the complications in store for us. Or rather, we were misled—no doubt in good faith. I accuse nobody. But you cannot imagine the glowing vistas that were made to sparkle before our eyes! Thus,

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we were assured that the Mexican people hated the republic and would hail with enthusiasm the proclamation of the monarchy; that a Catholic prince, of high birth and surpassing charm, like the Archduke Maximilian, would be welcomed everywhere with open arms, under triumphal arches and flowers; that even the United States, torn by their Civil War, would readily bow to our intervention, and so on. . . .”

And this time again I refrained from answering: “But to gauge all this humbug at its true value, it would have been enough to read the English and American newspapers—the repeated and identical warnings that reached us from London and Washington, from Lord Russell and from President Lincoln—the peremptory declaration that, among the Mexican people, the idea of monarchy was bound up with hateful memories of Spanish absolutism and clerical tyranny; that this throne, which had already cost so much pain to raise, would instantly collapse without the support of foreign bayonets; and finally that the United States, whatever their discords at the moment, would never ratify or tolerate the sov-

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ereignty of a Hapsburg on the continent of free America. . . .”

In embarking on this painful subject, did the unhappy Empress ask too much of her strength? Was she afraid that the impulsive frankness of her first admission might not lead her on to other and still graver avowals? Did she perhaps divine the unspoken objections which were gathering within me? Whatever it was, she suddenly broke off. And then, with the utmost dignity, and with concise and masculine vigor, she uttered these words:

“In the Mexican affair, the Emperor and I will always be condemned, because it ended in Querétaro! But to be just to us, it ought to be remembered that several times—for instance, after the entry of our troops into Mexico, after Bazaine’s victorious campaign in the northern provinces, after the warm reception of Maximilian in the capital—we had grounds for belief that the enterprise was going to be successful. . . . What’s more, we had no right to act otherwise than we did. The honor of the flag and the signature of France were pledged: we had to push forward our effort to the furthest bounds of possibility.”

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Having marked the end of the Mexican parenthesis with a short silence, she returned coldly to the Russo-Japanese conflict:

"You were telling me that General Kuropatkin . . ."

A few minutes later, as I was returning home on foot, I tried to find an explanation of the strange psychology of Napoleon III, his inability to distinguish the real from the possible, his cloudy imagination, always in travail, his insatiable desire for constructing grandiose and romantic schemes, surpassing all objective control. I remembered Lord Palmerston's epigram: "The Emperor Napoleon's head is like a warren: ideas are forever swarming into life in it, like rabbits. . . ." And I also recalled the formula in which the wise Drouyn de Lhuys¹ summed up the experience of his four Ministries: "The Emperor has immense desires and strictly limited faculties; he wants to do extraordinary things, and only manages to do extravagant ones." Was there not even a time when, during the Polish insurrection of 1863, he conceived the fantastic plan

¹ See Biographical Notes.

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of transferring the kings of Saxony and Hanover to South America, in order to obtain for himself, in the center of Europe, a territorial coinage with which to pay for the consent of Austria and Prussia to the reconstitution of Poland. . . ?

VI

The crisis of Sadowa. Exact version of the Council held at Saint-Cloud on July 5, 1866, under the Emperor's presidency. Initiative of the Empress. Moral depression of Napoleon III during the subsequent weeks.—The policy of compensations: the Rhineland provinces, Luxembourg, and Belgium. Towards the abyss.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 1905

VISIT to the Empress Eugénie, who is on her way to Cairo.

I found her more stirred than ever by the great problems of foreign policy—and stirring occasions have certainly not been lacking to her during the past few months. All the facts which have moved her, of course, are registered in her memory with their exact dates and circumstances.

She questioned me first on the unbroken chain of Russian disasters in Manchuria—Kinchou, Telissu, Motienling, Liao-Yang, Port Arthur, etc.—talking of them with such ease and clarity that she seems to have a map all the time before her. We then passed

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to the Hull incident, that incomprehensible blunder of the Russian squadron which, on emerging from the Skager-Rack, bombarded a peaceful flotilla of English fishing-boats which it mistook for Japanese destroyers.

"During three days," said the Empress, "I thought that war was inevitable between Russia and England. Even in the days of Fashoda I have never seen such outbursts of national fury. Had it not been for M. Delcassé's prompt and skillful mediation, the Plymouth squadron would have been off to bombard Cronstadt. . . ."

Later, she pressed me with questions on the revolutionary ferment engendered in the Russian people by the Manchurian disasters. She has scrupulously observed, retained, and catalogued all the symptoms: the assassination of Plehve, the Minister of the Interior; of General Bobrikov, Governor of Finland; of General Andreiev, Governor of Elizabethpol; not to mention the chiefs of police, officers of gendarmerie, and prison governors; nor has she failed to note the mutinies in barracks, the workmen's strikes, the peasant riots, etc. . . . And finally, through a confidence of the Dowager-Empress Maria

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Fedorovna, she is cognizant of the insidious maneuvers of William II beside his "dear Nicky" to induce him to forego the foolish Franco-Russian alliance in favor of a splendid Germano-Russo-French coalition, which "would soon break the back of England and, in consequence, wipe out dirty little Japan"; in any case, there need be no concern as to whether this pact would be agreeable to France; she would simply be called upon to accept it.

"You may well imagine," she said, "that I conveyed this confidence to King Edward. He replied to me, in very proper terms: 'The information you have received from Maria Fedorovna I have already received, myself, from M. Delcassé; they are in complete accord. As you are going to Paris and have a means of approach to M. Delcassé, be good enough to tell him on my behalf that I am deeply and lastingly grateful to him for having saved the peace on the occasion of the Hull incident; for it is he and he alone who saved it. I beg you further to tell him that I am his best friend, as England is the best friend of France. . . .' From King Edward's lips those words are of incalculable value; for he is universally admitted to be the master of English policy. Never

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since the Stuarts has the personal authority of the sovereign, or, as the jurists say, 'the King's prerogative in Council,' been so strong. . . ."

When we had finished with these grave subjects, the Empress asked me:

"What has become of you these last months? What did you do in the summer?"

"A rapid trip by motor-car, across Brittany, Anjou and Touraine; the Ministry grants me only a short holiday. And during September I had to take a cure at Vichy."

At the mention of Vichy she started. Guessing at her thought, I went on:

"Very often during my cure I tried to picture the sad reflections to which the Emperor must there have surrendered, in the shady alleys of the park, during the crisis of Sadowa. I even sought out the house where he stayed, a very simple *châlet* with a veranda. On the grill of the entrance there are still the intertwined N's, surmounted by the Imperial crown. It is a physician who now lives in the cottage."

She interrupted me in a slow grave voice, at moments tremulous:

"You are touching there on one of the most pain-

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ful memories of my life, one that still quivers within me like a sensitive nerve. . . . That stay of the Emperor at Vichy in the summer of 1866, after Sadowa, is the critical date, the date of doom for the Empire; it was during those months of July and August that our destiny was fixed! And of all that period there is not one fact, not one detail, that is not present in my mind. You had best question me!"

"You must excuse me, madame. I cannot bring myself to rouse such cruel emotions in Your Majesty."

"Have no fear. On the contrary, it will relieve me to parade all the sad past before you. It is so rarely that I have the chance, and the solace, of opening my floodgates! Will you question me?"

I then asked her exactly what took place at the famous Council at which she was present, held under the Emperor's presidency on July 5, 1866, two days after Sadowa. If the event had dated from last month she could not have answered with more precision and fire.

"First of all," she said to me, "I must admit that the Emperor had learned of the Austrian defeat without distress; for he desired it, and had even helped

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indirectly to bring it about by procuring for Prussia the alliance with Italy."

"Allow me, madame, to stop you here for a moment with a question which, I think, dominates all that is going to follow. Why was it that, on the day when the Austro-Prussian conflict became inevitable, the Emperor staked all the resources of his diplomacy to assure Prussia the military coöperation of Italy?"

"Why? First, of course, because he wished to complete the work of his which had been interrupted in 1859, in freeing Venetia. . . . And then . . . and then, alas! because he counted on Prussian gratitude to secure for ourselves the Rhine provinces. You know well that it was always his dearest dream to abolish the Treaty of 1815. And you must admit that it was a fine dream!"

I bowed my head in acquiescence. But inwardly I reflected that the Treaties of 1815, despite all that was painful to France in them, had at least offered him an immense advantage; for they had encircled him with a girdle of small piecemeal states, unequal and heterogeneous, which protected his frontier. And I also recalled that the Italo-Prussian alliance in

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1866—a monstrosity from the French point of view—was negotiated clandestinely and by Napoleon alone, without even the knowledge of his Foreign Minister, Drouyn de Lhuys, who could later write: “The Emperor never unburdened himself to me on the Italo-Prussian alliance.”

The Empress, however, went on in a firm tone, with an accent of courageous will:

“Well, on the morning of July 5th the Council of Ministers met under the presidency of the Emperor, at Saint-Cloud. I was present. You will recall that on the eve of this Francis Joseph had yielded Venetia to France and accepted our mediation. It was on this that the discussion opened. Drouyn de Lhuys at once proposed to assume a forcible attitude towards Germany. The Emperor listened, without voicing any objection, but without giving approval. . . . For my own part, I inwardly approved. However, before giving my opinion, I asked Marshal Randon, the Minister of War, whether we were in a position to make an immediate military demonstration on the Rhine. He answered, and I can still hear the sound of his voice: ‘Yes. We can concentrate 80,000 men on the Rhine immediately, and 250,000 within

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twenty days. . . .' As the Emperor did not break his silence, I took up the project of Drouyn de Lhuys with all the zeal I had. At that moment, I declare, I felt that the fate of France and the future of our dynasty were at stake. It was one of the great moments of my life. . . . But suddenly La Valette intervened, in a most keen and peremptory tone, to oppose the proposals of Drouyn de Lhuys. Among his arguments there was one which I thought struck the Emperor with particular force: namely, that in seeking to check the advance of Prussia we should be forced into an alliance with Austria, and by that very fact into a quarrel with Italy; and this amounted to a reversal of all the political tactics to which the Emperor had been devoting himself for a year past, ever since the ill-fated visit of Bismarck to Biarritz. As regards the territorial compensations which the aggrandizement of Prussia would permit us to claim, La Valette had no doubts of our obtaining them without difficulty by a friendly negotiation with Berlin. . . . At that I leaped up: 'When the Prussian armies are no longer tied up in Bohemia and can turn back against ourselves, Bismarck will simply laugh at our claims!' And I even said to the Em-

peror: 'Prussia did not scruple to throw a barrier in front of you after Solferino. Why should you worry over doing the same to her after Sadowa? In 1859 we had to yield because we could not have found fifty thousand men to bar the road to Paris, but today it is the road to Berlin that is lying open. . . .' Drouyn de Lhuys and Randon, feeling that they had support, returned to the attack. In the end the Council took three decisions. The first was the immediate summoning of the Chambers to obtain necessary credits for a general mobilization of the army; the second, the assembling, likewise immediate, of 50,000 men on the Rhine; and the third, the dispatch of a threatening note to Berlin, warning Prussia that we would not tolerate any territorial alterations in Europe to which we had not given our previous consent. The Council further decided that these three measures should be made public the next day, in the *Moniteur Officiel*. . . . But on the next day, July 6th, the *Moniteur Officiel* published nothing of the sort. In the course of the night other influences were brought to bear on the Emperor. And events took their course."

She uttered those last words icily, her head and

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shoulders stiffened, fixing me with a hard look as if to make it plain that she could not fittingly explain herself more fully on the hidden influences which, during that fateful night, mastered the cloudy and elusive will of Napoleon III. In any case, how could I have found the nerve to question her, when I saw her raising a handkerchief to her eyes?

My silence gave her assurance, and she resumed in the most friendly tone:

"Now give me your frank opinion on a point which sometimes torments me. Do you consider my judgment correct when I backed the proposal of Drouyn de Lhuys with such ardor?"

"Without a doubt. It was Your Majesty that day who spoke the true words of political reason and national interest."

"Your opinion is of great moment to me because, as events turned out, I mean after our misfortunes in 1870, La Valette and Rouher used often to say to me: 'If the Emperor had adopted the suggestion of Drouyn de Lhuys in 1866, Bismarck would have instantly patched up a hurried peace with Austria, and all the Prussian armies, still drunk with victory, would have been flung against us. Now, whatever

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Marshal Randon may have said, we were not ready. Mexico had put our organization out of gear and emptied our arsenals. And so, if we had been foolish enough to stand up to Prussia in the month of July, 1866, we should have had Sedan, and perhaps even worse than Sedan, four years earlier.' ”

“Your Majesty should not harbor any remorse in this connection. The question is decided once and for all by history. Bismarck used often to enjoy pushing his frankness to the point of impudence and effrontery, and about 1874 he admitted before the Reichstag that the slightest hint of a military demonstration on the part of France, after Sadowa, would have forced the Prussian armies to withdraw from their struggle with Austria and turn on their tracks as fast as possible to cover Berlin. . . . But, madame, I can quote you a still more precise argument. Last summer I was dining at Athis with our former ambassador to Berlin and London, Baron de Courcel, who was my first chief, as Director of Foreign Affairs, when I started at the Quai d'Orsay. He has always been a good friend to me, and I never tire of questioning him about Bismarck, who obviously held him in high esteem, even to the length of show-



EMPRESS EUGÉNIE PRAYING

By Lefèvre (1853)
Gift of Count Fleury



NAPOLEON III AND EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

Lithograph by A. Lacanchie

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ing him personal attentions, which, as you know, was not his wont. Well, M. de Courcel told me that evening that the tremendous Iron Chancellor, during a holiday stay at Varzin, had openly declared to him: 'I don't understand yet why the French army did not cross the Rhine in July, 1866, while we were entangled in the passes of Bohemia. And when I say "the French army," I'm wrong: one single division, fifteen thousand men, would have sufficed! The mere sight of your red trousers in the Duchy of Baden and the Palatinate would have raised the whole of Southern Germany against Prussia. In the meantime the splendid troops of the Archduke Albert would have had no more to fear from the Italians after Custozza and would have come to reinforce the army of Bénédek. And that would have been the end of us. I do not know if we could even have covered Berlin.'"

"That ought to console me. But it is heart-rending to hear you."

And once again I saw her lift the handkerchief to her eyes. She continued:

"I vaguely remembered that speech of Bismarck's

in 1877, but I did not attach much importance to it. I saw in it, on his part, just a trick in parliamentary warfare; but M. de Courcel's confidence has an unmistakable stamp of truth."

After slowly shaking her head for a long time, as if she were trying to disentangle her memories, she went on:

"I could also invoke another piece of evidence in favor of my argument, and one that will certainly astonish you—the evidence of the Emperor. . . . Yes, five or six days after the famous Council we have spoken of he admitted his mistake before me. But it was already too late to mend it; the hour of fate had passed by. . . . At that moment he seemed so utterly crushed that I trembled for our future. Everything that the opposition press wrote, everything that men like Thiers or Jules Favre¹ or Prévost-Paradol were saying, the Emperor was saying to himself. One evening in particular, when I was strolling alone with him in one of the walks at Saint-Cloud, he was completely bowled over: I could not get a single word out of him. Finding nothing more I could say to him, I was sobbing. My soul was on

¹ See Biographical Notes.

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the rack. Heavens! How dearly we paid for our grandeurs!

"It was in this state of mind that he went to take his cure at Vichy towards the end of July. As soon as he arrived there, the moral shock he had undergone reacted violently on his physical condition. For several days his doctors believed him to be in danger. These were the first startling symptoms of the trouble which gave him so much suffering in 1870, and which ultimately killed him. Nevertheless, in spite of his horrible pain, he was obliged to receive his ministers and to make decisions as grave as they were urgent, for public opinion was now loosened against us. He needed immediately, and at any price, a striking compensation for the impressive expansion of Prussia. It really seemed as if the vanquished side at Sadowa had been not the Austrians, but ourselves! It was even being said that France had never in all her history been standing in greater danger. . . . And it was then that we made our claim at Berlin for the cession of Mayence and the Rhine provinces—which would bring us next to seeking to conquer Belgium and then Luxembourg. From this moment we were on the slope leading to the

abyss, the slope up which there is no return. . . . But if the Emperor made a mistake in what is generally styled his 'policy of compensations,' I am no less in error than he was; more so, perhaps, for his sufferings and prostration bereft him for the moment of all independence in mind. It was therefore my part to enlighten him and prove to him that he still was astray. But no! I heeded only my personal feelings, my chivalrous notion of honor, my impatience to restore in a flash our prestige in the eyes of the world, and finally the absolute certainty that the French army had no equal in Europe. How could I bow in these conditions to the prodigious aggrandizement of Prussia, to the vista of this new Empire? Through our fault, this Empire was about to group forty million men at our eastern gates under the Hohenzollern hegemony, while a unified Italy—our work, also—would be grouping another twenty-five million beyond our Alpine frontier. No, no! We could not allow it. As we had missed the moment for military action, we must pursue our revenge by diplomatic action. We failed. So be it! But what we did do we had to do; we had not the right

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to stand idly by while the face of Europe was being transformed."

She paused, breathless, making visible efforts to contain herself, and then finished her recital with an air of exhaustion that made her eyes seem as if lost in their orbits:

"We had not reached the end of our troubles. On August 7th the Emperor left Vichy—you will understand why I have never forgotten the date—and on arriving at Saint-Cloud he was still so sick and dejected that he had to take to his bed. And then, the next day, we received a telegram dispatched from Saint-Nazaire. It was the Empress Charlotte!¹ She had just disembarked unexpectedly from Mexico! We were entering upon a fresh tragedy. . . . And it was not the last!"

At these words she gazed for a long time at the portrait of the Emperor beside her, its misty, undecipherable features set there like an eloquent illustration of our talk. Then, as a signal to take my leave, she stretched out her hand to me; it was trembling.

I thanked her affectionately for having called up

¹ See Biographical Notes.

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before me these pathetic memories of the great past, and asked her if she authorized me to perpetuate them in writing:

"They would make a priceless historical document," I said.

"Yes, I authorize you. But in setting down your notes, do not be too stern. Don't forget that the Emperor was the most generous of men, and that the greatness of France was like a religion to him. . . . Don't forget, either, that the crown of monarchs is almost always a crown of thorns."

Alone by my fireside this evening, I have tried to read, but in vain; as the moments pass, I can feel a picture being graven on my memory with the sharp-cut relief of a medallion—the pitiful picture of the poor downfallen Empress who has just been opening her heart before my eyes, that heart once so radiant and triumphant, and now ravaged and mournful, filled with funereal phantoms and tragic associations.

VII

The Hohenzollern candidature and the War of 1870. —" 'This is MY war!' Never did that sacrilege come from my lips!"—Responsibilities of the Imperial government in the catastrophe.—Faults in military organization; the Emperor better informed than any one.—Total misunderstanding of diplomatic situation in Europe.—The Duc de Gramont before the Legislative Body. Threatening declaration. The specter of Sadowa.—Withdrawal of the Hohenzollern candidate. Council of July 12th at Saint-Cloud. The fateful decision.—Despite physical sickness, Napoleon III takes command of the army.—Bold intervention of Princess Mathilde. Terrible accusation of Prince Napoleon against the Empress.—The Prince Imperial at Saarebrück.—An Æschylean memory.

SUNDAY, APRIL 22, 1906

HAVING learned that I was passing through the Côte d'Azur, the Empress invited me to come and take luncheon with her in her delightful villa at Cap Martin, the Villa Cynros.¹

I arrived at the appointed time, half past twelve, and the Empress received me in the drawing-room:

¹ Cynros is the Greek name for Corsica.

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"We shall not take luncheon until one o'clock," she said; "but I was anxious that we should be able to chat freely about present-day politics; as you may imagine, they are intensely interesting to me. We shall be less at our ease at luncheon, as I have several guests staying with me at the moment. The afternoon we shall devote entirely to the past. I have lately been turning over in my mind many old and sorrowful memories of which I am anxious to tell you. So I shan't release you until six o'clock at the earliest, and I make no scruple about it. If you have any fair ladies expecting you elsewhere, so much the worse for them. I have you and I hold you!"

After an eloquent tribute to Delcassé, "who, in the perspective of history, will appear as one of the great servants of France,"¹ the Empress questioned me keenly about the Algeciras Conference, which had just completed its work:

"What has been going on behind the scenes of the Conference? Is our great dream of Morocco still practicable? Do you believe in the possibility

¹ During June, 1905, a parliamentary intrigue, exploiting the emotion roused among the French public by the threats of the German press, forced M. Delcassé to leave the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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of a Franco-German reconciliation? What, exactly, are our relations with St. Petersburg, London, Madrid, Rome, Vienna? In short, now that M. Rouvier has so shamefully sacrificed M. Delcassé, what changes are there in the European situation?"

"There are no such changes in Europe. M. Rouvier has not been long in losing the naïve illusions he cherished regarding Germany. This cunning old financier imagined that by two or three courteous conversations he would dissipate all Berlin's distrust of us; and he was a long way out! After a month of ill-tempered discussions he gave a tremendous bang of his fist on the table, and exclaimed: 'Look at that! They don't care a damn for me, these fellows!' And from then, in spite of the truce of Algeciras, Franco-German relations have not become any less tense. . . . On the other hand, our intimacy with England has become very much closer, as was shown by King Edward's recent visit to Paris."

"In this connection I have a confidence for your ear. I learn from the best source that the King of Spain is expecting a crisis in the near future between Germany and France. According to his informants

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in Vienna, he declares, the Emperor William is being pushed on by the Crown Prince and the General Staff to thoughts of attacking us, on one pretext or another, before Russia has time to restore her military strength."

"Your Majesty's information is perfectly accurate. King Alphonso is always ready to talk quite openly with M. Jules Cambon, and has recently told him this in the same words. We immediately informed the Emperor Nicholas and King Edward. So we must be more vigilant than ever, more ready to strengthen our alliances, and to try always to be on the right side in the opinion of the world. . . ."

On the stroke of one o'clock, the major-domo announced luncheon. The Empress moved into the neighboring room, where we found already there her nephew, the Duke of Alba, the Comte and Comtesse Walewski, Mlle. d'Allonville, Mlle. de Lesseps, and Franceschini Piétri.

During the meal, which was perfectly served, the conversation ran upon all the topics of the day, with much spirit, but only superficially. I had leisure to observe the Empress, who seemed to me to have aged somewhat since our last meeting. In a fortnight she

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will be eighty! The stiffness of her movements is more pronounced, and her face has become thinner. But she has lost nothing of her fine carriage; not a line of her figure has failed; her eyes, with their black penciling beneath them, retain their hard flash; and her speech has remained clear, sonorous, unhesitating, and crisp.

After luncheon she withdrew for a few minutes, on the pretext of leaving Walewski and myself to smoke our cigars.

"In quarter of an hour," she said to me, gayly, "I shall come back for you, and give you no further respite."

My cigar was barely finished when I saw her come back into the room, wearing a large black hat, the fingers of her gloved hands holding a parasol, a checked shawl on her shoulders. Leaning on my arm, she led me out to the garden which runs down towards the sea.

The afternoon was radiant and mild as a June morning, the sky milky blue, and the air seemed to quiver in the exquisite light. Close to the house, thousands of flowers, yellow, blue, pink, white, mauve, and scarlet, waved in the sunlight. In the

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rest of the park the vegetation is of the sterner sort—cypresses, pines, oaks, laurels, acanthus, rock-roses, stocks, and myrtles.

We thus slowly reached a narrow terrace bordering the beach, where a semicircle of armchairs was set in the shelter of a clump of bushes.

"Let us sit down here," she said to me. "This is my favorite corner. I never tire of gazing on this scene."

In front of us the coast and its promontories stretched away beyond Monaco and Cap Ferrat, right to the distant point of Antibes. The purity of the air, the luminous depth of the horizons, and the tranquil breathing of the waves made the prospect one of matchless nobility.

Immediately, without overture, the Empress began in a resolute tone:

"For a long time now I have wanted to let you have my views on the War of 1870, and especially on the part attributed to myself in it. But I waited for the chance of receiving you here, in this house where I feel completely myself, where I have so often cross-examined my conscience. You remember Shakespeare's fine thought in 'Hamlet':

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"This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

Long ago I took those beautiful lines as my motto. And so it is the absolute truth that I am about to tell you, the truth that I would swear to before God."

Then, flinging back the shawl on her shoulders, as if to have more freedom for the gestures of her hands, she went on:

"You recommended me last year to read the work of M. de la Gorce on the Second Empire. The two volumes recently published describe the Hohenzollern incident, the beginnings of the war, and the revolution of September 4th. But before embarking on this reading I was determined to know what the author thought of my share of responsibility in our disasters, whether he too accused me of having provoked that tragic war, of having turned it into '*my* war.' Well, I was told that M. de la Gorce had upheld the accusation; and then I had not the heart to read his work, notwithstanding the respectful tone which I know he maintains throughout. . . . It is M. Thiers who must bear the paternity of that odious legend: he was pleased to declare that on July 23rd,

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when I received Lesourd, the first secretary of our Berlin embassy, at Saint-Cloud, after he had just notified the declaration of war to Bismarck, I said to him, 'It was I who wanted this war: *it is my war!*' Well, never—do you hear me?—*never* did that sacrilegious phrase, nor any like it, come from my lips! What is more, I later had Lesourd questioned about this; and he loyally admitted, in a letter of which I have the original, that I never boasted before him of having let loose the war. I beg you not to forget my protestation, and to spread it abroad when I have left this world of sorrows behind me."

"I certainly shall not fail. . . . But may I venture to ask for a definite detail?"

"Ask all the details you choose. I have nothing to hide from you. . . . Indeed, let us do better. You shall tell me quite frankly what are the facts which strike you as most gravely involving the responsibility of the Imperial régime in the War of 1870. And on each point I shall explain myself. This will not be a defendant's pleading, for I shan't try to disguise our mistakes and failings; it will be the whole truth. Go on! I am listening."

After a moment of reflection to collect my mem-

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ory, I set out in order the main heads of complaint which may properly be laid against the Imperial régime for its policy of July, 1870. They were these:

1st. That the shortcomings of our military organization forbade us to settle our quarrel with Prussia by force of arms.

2nd. That the diplomatic situation in Europe did not permit us to count on any alliance.

3rd. That war could have been honorably avoided if the previous negotiations had been conducted with less boastfulness and more coolness of temper.

4th. That the Emperor ought not to have assumed the functions of *generalissimo*, because he was both morally and physically incapable of exercising them.

Sitting bolt upright, with twitching hands and blazing eyes, the Empress listened to my statement of claims without once interrupting me. When I finished, she said:

"I thank you for having spoken so freely. I am going to answer all your complaints. . . ."

On the first score, she alleged as excuse that the

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shortcomings in our military situation were not revealed in all their terrifying gravity until after the German army had entered on the scene:

"Until that moment, I assure you, the French army was regarded by all Frenchmen, even by enemies of the régime, as the foremost in the world. That we were bound to be victorious was never in doubt, never to anyone. But it was admitted that the struggle would be stern enough. Lebœuf, Canrobert, Ducrot, Vaillant, Frossart, Bourbaki, Lebrun, Gali-fet—they all vouched for our victory . . . and what a victory! I think I can still hear them telling me, at Saint-Cloud: 'Never has our army been in better condition, better equipped, in better fighting mettle! Nineteen chances out of every score are in our favor! Our offensive beyond the Rhine will be so shattering that it will cut Germany into two, and we shall swallow Prussia at one gulp. We'll soon find the way back to Jena!' That was what they never ceased to repeat all around me during that tragic week. And you must admit that I could not help being impressed?"

She stopped for an instant to take breath. I put forward the timid objection:

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"And yet there was some one, madame, some one very highly placed, who did not share this optimism."

"And who was that?"

"The Emperor. . . . He knew better than anyone the inadequacy of our military preparations. The warm support he gave to Marshal Niel's reform scheme, the staff conferences which he held secretly at Compiègne in the autumn of 1869, and, finally, the minute attention he bestowed on the famous reports of Colonel Stoffel on the training of the Prussian army—all this persistent working of his mind proves that he gauged with perfect clear-sightedness the overwhelming superiority of the German forces. . . . And also, I cannot find any explanation of why, when he saw the approaching peril so clearly, he let the Émile Ollivier Ministry offer the Legislative Body, as a gift to celebrate its accession, a reduction of 10,000 men on the annual quota."

In stinging tones she replied:

"There! That's the beauty of the parliamentary régime! Electoral interests first! Even before the national!—And then, don't forget that the Emperor had just renounced personal government and just reëstablished the political authority of the Cham-

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bers. He therefore no longer had any right to go against his Ministers. And besides, even if he had had the right, he would not have had the strength. At the moment when the Legislative Body made the unpardonable error (just three months before the war!) of reducing our quota, my poor husband was struggling in a crisis of his kidney trouble, the longest and most atrocious bout he had yet gone through; he practically counted for nothing."

As she spoke these last words the pitch of her voice broke a little and I could feel that tears were not far distant. But promptly she pulled herself together:

"And now," she continued, "let us go on to your second head of reproach. According to you, the diplomatic situation in Europe ought to have forbidden us to count on any alliance. . . . You are right. We made a profound mistake. I do not wish to take our diplomats to book: the Emperor would never have allowed that. But I have the right to say that, in our state of blindness, the seductive words of Metternich and Nigra counted for a great deal. I admit, on the other hand, that they were sincere. As for knowing that the handing over of Rome to the

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Italians would have sufficed to win the military co-operation of Austria and Italy, you will recall that we have already discussed that.¹ So I shall not go over that again. . . . But to finish with this question of the alliances, I should like to say something in parenthesis. I lately read in a French newspaper that the Republic had succeeded in creating a whole system of alliances against Germany, while in July, 1870, the Empire was completely isolated in Europe. Now do not bear me any grudge for what I am going to say to you. It's agreed, isn't it, that we are talking heart-to-heart? Well, if the European powers refused to come to our aid in 1870, it was because our prestige inspired them with fear; they imagined, every one of them, that they would stand to gain by our downfall. They were not slow to see their mistake. Today, France is no longer dangerous in their eyes: she appears to them necessary and inoffensive. . . . I will go further: I declare that, if we had not been dethroned on September 4th, we should for a certainty have succeeded in refashioning the collective personality of Europe and marshaling it against Germany. That shameful revolution—and I call it

¹ See the conversation of July 22, 1903.

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'shameful' not because it was directed against us, but because it took place *in front of the enemy*—well, that criminal revolution ruined the moral force of our diplomacy in one day. In spite of our disasters, we ought to have been maintained in power and allowed to finish the war. Afterward they could have asked us for all the explanations they liked. But I repeat: had it not been for the aberration of the Fourth of September, Germany would soon have seen Europe rising across her path."

I had not the heart to rob the Empress of such a consoling illusion; but her theory cannot possibly be upheld. By the sole fact of Napoleon III being a prisoner and our last remaining army being blockaded in Metz, Imperial diplomacy had lost all its credit. Austria and Italy could congratulate themselves on having eluded our alliance; Victor Emmanuel exclaimed, with his great laugh: "Aha! We're well out of it!" England, under the government of the Puritan Gladstone, had not yet recovered from her indignation on learning that Napoleon had sought Bismarck's permission to conquer Belgium. And Russia, too, secretly allied with Prussia, and also cherishing an obstinate spite against us for our equiv-

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ocal attitude in the Polish question, rejoiced to see the day draw near for the revision of the Treaty of Paris. After Sedan, the military resources of France were not completely exhausted, but she no longer held a single diplomatic trump.

However, the Empress turned to the third of my reproaches: "That war could have been honorably avoided if the previous negotiations had been conducted with less boastfulness and more coolness of temper."

"Tell me all you think about that," she said. "It is a question fully within your competence, one of your own vocation. What are your criticisms from that point of view?"

"First of all, madame, the diplomatic procedure strikes me as having been badly launched. From the first moment, a threatening tone was adopted and public opinion was inflamed. The ministerial declaration read before the Legislative Body on July 6th by the Duc de Gramont is like a trumpet-call to attack: 'We shall not suffer a foreign power to set one of its princes upon the throne of Charles the Fifth. In any such event, we should know how to carry out our duty with neither hesitation nor weak-

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ness.' And in a burst of enthusiasm all the Deputies stood up, shouting: 'It's war! It's war!' Émile Olivier himself remarked during the sitting that the ministerial declaration rang out like a declaration of war. By this opening ultimatum the Emperor's Ministers burned the bridges behind them and put themselves in a position from which they could not withdraw, could not even temporize, without covering themselves with shame. Diplomatically, this was a grave error in tactics: a negotiation must never be opened with a defiance."

She interrupted me in quivering tones:

"Withdraw? Temporize? We could not! We should have had the whole country arising against us. . . . They were already taunting us with our weakness; a terrible remark had reached even our ears: 'The Hohenzollern candidature is a second Sadowa in the making!' For four years our ruthless enemies, Orleanists, Legitimists and Republicans, had never wearied of flinging it in our faces. Every day they took up their odious refrain; every day they opened the scar afresh, as a dagger is twisted in a wound. By dint of parading the phantom of Sadowa, they had at last brought the whole of France

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to believe that we had dealt her an unpardonably shameful blow, a disgrace such as she had never known since Rossbach. . . . And that is what you must bear in mind in passing judgment on our policy in July, 1870. We could not expose the Empire to a second Sadowa; it could not have borne the shock."

"And that is just why the ministerial statement of July 6th seems to me so maladroit; it was exciting the national sentiment still further, whereas it ought to have been directed solely to bridling it."

But I did not press the point, and went on:

"And now on the 12th of July, by a chance that was beyond hoping for, Prince Anton von Hohenzollern notifies Marshal Prim that he withdraws the candidature of his son for the Spanish throne. Was Prince Anton obeying the advice of King William? It is very probable; but it makes little difference. The provocative candidature has been withdrawn; the essential point is won; the honor of France is safe. And thus a success is scored for our game, a sharp check for Bismarck's. It is said for certain that this gave the Emperor keen delight."

With a nod the Empress confirmed this; but I no-

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ticed that she did not tell me what her own feelings had been. . . . I went on:

"I had the curiosity once to consult the dossier of the Hohenzollern incident in the archives of the Quai d'Orsay. I wished to have in my hands all the documents of the negotiation. Well, madame, when I reached the date of July 12th, and there saw Gramont abruptly reopening our quarrel with Prussia with his declaration that the withdrawal of the Hohenzollern candidate was not enough, and that we must insist on King William's promise that it would never again be put forward, and when I read, under that same date of July 12th, at seven o'clock in the evening, the telegram instructing our ambassador, Benedetti, to inform the King of our fresh demand—then I failed to understand."

She stopped me drily:

"What could you not understand?"

"I did not understand, and cannot yet understand, how anyone, who had just escaped a frightful danger, could thus hurl himself back into it, without any compulsion, like some one flinging himself over a precipice! But in any case, I know that here I am touching on a point of history where the personal



GOLD BRACELET CONTAINING MINIATURES OF THE EMPEROR,
EMPRESS EUGÉNIE, PRINCESS MATHILDE, KING JÉRÔME AND HIS
SON

Originally in the possession of Empress Eugénie, who presented it to a princess
of the court. Gift of the Baroness d'Alexandry d'Orengiani

rôle of Your Majesty is claimed to have been considerable, and even decisive. I shall, therefore, listen gratefully to all that Your Majesty may be pleased to tell me, and I refrain from further questioning."

Darting the sudden flash of her eyes at me, she spoke, with courage and pride in her tone:

"Yes, I fully approved Gramont's action, and even gave him the full weight of my support when he came and said to us: 'Our difference with Prussia cannot be closed simply by the withdrawal of the Hohenzollern candidate. That is a merely ridiculous solution and would not satisfy French opinion; we should be reproached, and rightly so, for having been the dupes of Bismarck. Moreover, I have just heard that the right wing of the Legislative Body intends to interpellate us on the question of the guaranties which we demanded from King William to save us from being ever again in danger of seeing a German prince reigning in Madrid. If we do not secure these indispensable guaranties, then France is humiliated and affronted in the eyes of Europe; in the heart of every Frenchman there will be an explosion of wrath against the Emperor and that means the end of the Empire. . . .' This happened at Saint-Cloud

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on July 12th, about five o'clock in the afternoon, at a council held by the Emperor, myself, and Gramont. The Emperor raised no objection."

When she spoke the word "council," I inwardly substituted the words "secret conclave." And I was stupefied by the thought that so grave a matter—for it involved nothing less than the whole future of the nation—should be debated surreptitiously, like some court intrigue, in the presence of one single Minister, without the knowledge of any of the others. Obviously, the conversion of Napoleon III to parliamentary ideas still left something to be desired; he remained a conspirator to the roots of his being.

After taking breath for a moment, the Empress continued:

"I had long been convinced that we were treading a fatal path, that the Liberal Empire was leading us to the abyss, to revolution, and the worst of revolutions, the kind that carried away Louis Philippe, one of contempt. . . . No, after Sadowa and Mexico, we could no longer put the national pride through a new ordeal. We had to take a vengeance. You will perhaps raise the objection—I am familiar with it—that the Empire alone was considered and not

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France? But God is my witness that I never separated France from the Empire in my mind; I did not conceive of French greatness and French prosperity apart from the Imperial régime. And as my husband's health was becoming such a source of anxiety, I had first and foremost to concern myself with handing over power to our son intact: for it was through him that Napoleonic institutions were to be rejuvenated. That is the reason for my whole-hearted support of Gramont's proposal."

I ventured to ask:

"In the course of this discussion, did anyone reflect that the reopening of our dispute with Prussia would almost inevitably bring war in its train?"

"No. . . . We only discussed the necessity of putting a stop to Bismarck's offensive machinations. We had no desire for war; we sought neither occasion nor pretext for war. Nevertheless, we did not fear it; for, as I tell you again, our army seemed to us invincible and we counted on strong alliances. . . . Oh! three days later, when Bismarck slapped our face with the Ems telegram and wanted to make Europe believe that King William had scornfully dismissed our ambassador, there could be no further

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question of preserving the peace. We had felt the blow of an insult, direct, brutal, and mortifying. We had to pick up the gauntlet! We no longer had any choice save between war and dishonor! And on that point I hardly think you will contradict me."

"Alas, madame! Once again I am unable to agree with Your Majesty's opinion."

She trembled.

"What! Do you consider that, in the face of such an outrage, we were not absolutely bound to call France to arms?"

"I think that even at that date the catastrophe could have been averted, had the diplomatic maneuvers been handled less feverishly. . . . There is no doubt at all that by publishing and falsifying the Ems telegram, Bismarck flung a gross insult in our face, and no doubt that he sought by that insult to force us to draw the sword, so that afterward he could throw back on us the primary responsibility for the breach. But why did they play into his hands? The snare was obvious. Why rush into it? Why this haste to make a solemn declaration of war before the Chambers on July 15th?"

"And what could still be done?"

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"Our ambassador ought to have been asked whether King William had really refused him admittance at his door. Benedetti's reply would at once have laid bare Bismarck's imposture and the true designs of Prussia. What an argument in our favor before the chancelleries of Europe, before the whole world! War would thus have been avoided, or at least postponed, and this would have left us time to strengthen our military forces and make sure of allies for ourselves."

She stopped me nervously:

"No, no! War could not be avoided. . . . You cannot imagine the force of patriotic feeling which stirred the whole of France at that moment! Even Paris, up till then so hostile to the Empire, showed herself admirably enthusiastic, confident, and determined: along the boulevards wild crowds were endlessly shouting, 'To Berlin! To Berlin!' No, I assure you no power on earth could have prevented war a moment longer."

For an instant she was silent, absorbed in meditation, her eyes half-closed. Then, brushing her hand over her forehead with a quick movement, she went on:

"We have one last point to deal with. You said—did you not?—that the Emperor ought not to have taken over the functions of *generalissimo*, because he was morally and physically incapable of exercising them. I feel grateful to you for asking the question; I shall thus be able to give you the means of refuting, should opportunity arise, one of the most insulting of the calumnies that have been flung at me. I shall not surprise you when I say that it originated in the entourage of Prince Napoleon, where some historians were cynical enough to gather it. . . . Here, then, is how I am incriminated. On July 2, 1870, Professor Germain Sée was summoned to a consultation at Saint-Cloud. Now, according to the story, I alone knew the nature of his report; it revealed to me that the Emperor was suffering from the stone, of which everybody was still ignorant. I also learned, they say, that he was henceforth incapable of riding on horseback, or even supporting the slightest physical fatigue. But I instantly concealed this report without showing it to anyone. A few days later war broke out. And they say that in spite of the terrible secret which was in my hands, and mine alone, I stubbornly pressed my husband to take over the

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supreme command of the armies. What was my object . . .?—But there you will detect the hand of my treacherous cousin. . . . !

“My object, of course, was first of all to have myself appointed Regent, at the very opening of hostilities. But that could not satisfy my ambition. The immediate Regency was merely my overture for a grander project, a sinister and Machiavellian plan. Whereupon I am supposed to have said: ‘The Emperor will soon give out under the overstrain he is going to impose on himself. His strength will collapse quite soon. If he is forced to admit his physical impotence, that is really tantamount to abdication. If he clings to his command, it will mean death. So in either case the throne will be my own until my son comes of full age.’ Such is the monstrous plan I am supposed to have conceived in the recesses of my mind. Really, Agrippina and Lady Macbeth could not have bettered it!

“And now for the exact truth! Yes, I did know that the Emperor was ill. But of the exact nature of his illness I was totally ignorant. The doctors themselves did not know it, or at least could not succeed in agreeing on the diagnosis. As for the con-

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sultation with Professor Germain Sée, he intrusted his report in a sealed envelope to the Emperor's physician-in-chief, our old friend Dr. Conneau, who did not think fit to show it to me. Was he right or was he wrong? That's another matter. The fact remains that the envelope was not opened until after my husband's death in 1873. . . . In that report all the symptoms I had been familiar with, vesical spasms, intense pain in the loins, frequent hæmaturia, etc., are carefully enumerated, and their origin is attributed to a stone in the bladder. But the other consultant physicians—Nélaton, Ricord, Fauvel, Corvisart, and Conneau—did not completely bear out this opinion; they were agreed only on one point, that it was essential to refrain from any local intervention. Conneau, who worshiped my husband and was deeply devoted to myself, only mentioned rheumatism and cystitis to me. Nay more, he gave me no hint of any particular anxiety when the Emperor assumed the functions of generalissimo. Nevertheless, as I was terribly distressed to see him sometimes suffering so cruelly, I had been careful to have packed in his luggage all the remedies, sedatives, appliances, and resources which medicine then had

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at its disposal for affections of the bladder. And unhappily he had only too great need of them; for from the moment of his arrival at Metz he was seized with shooting pains which left him no further respite. And soon tortures of the mind were added. Thenceforth his existence was a martyrdom. . . . Heavens! it was piteous . . . ! Promise me, won't you, that one day when I am gone you will tell all this story?"

While I was answering this painful recital with a few soothing phrases, an anecdote told me by Princess Mathilde came suddenly back to me. A few days after the declaration of war, about July 20th, the Princess had gone to see the Emperor at Saint-Cloud. He received her in his study; his face was ashen, his eyelids puffy, his eyes dead, his legs wavering, his shoulders bowed. With that blunt frankness with which she faced everyone, whoever it might be, she asked him: "Is it true that you are taking command of the army?"—"Yes."—"But you're not in a fit state to take it! You can't sit astride a horse! You can't even stand the shaking of a carriage! How will you get on when there is fighting?" He answered her in a muffled voice: "You exaggerate, my

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dear . . . you exaggerate.”—“No, I’m not exaggerating. Look at yourself in a glass!”—“Oh, I dare say. I’m not beautiful, I’m not very dapper!” And as she courageously insisted, he waved his hand in a gesture of resigned fatalism.

While I inwardly called to mind this significant dialogue, the Empress had again fallen into a brown study. Leaning forward, her elbows resting on her knees, she was mechanically tracing lines in the sand with the tip of her parasol. From time to time she tossed her head. Remembering her age, and fearing lest this painful conversation might have exhausted her, I proposed returning to the house. She declined.

“Listen,” she said after a long silence, as if she were continuing out loud the thread of her inward discourse. . . . “Listen. Here is another frightful memory that comes back to me. It concerns the Prince Imperial. As soon as war had broken out I sent him to the fighting-line. And I swear to you that I had made the sacrifice of his life; I gave it as a burnt-offering to God, during the last Mass which I heard with my husband and son at Saint-Cloud, on the morning of their departure for headquarters, and which our principal chaplain, Mgr. Darboy, Arch-

bishop of Paris, had come out to celebrate. . . . I had no doubts of his courage, the dear boy! But after all, he was fourteen! And I could not but fear, I was bound to fear, that he might be somewhat put out when he first heard the whiz of bullets; so I charged his two orderly-officers always to keep close beside him. . . . It was at Saarebrück, on August 2nd, that he received his baptism of fire. That evening the Emperor telegraphed to me: 'I am happy to inform you that Louis has shown admirable coolness. He looked as if he were strolling in the Bois de Boulogne. Once he even calmly picked up a ball which had just fallen at his feet. Some soldiers of the Guard shed tears when they saw his calm.' I had just finished reading this dispatch when Émile Ollivier came in. 'We must publish that!' he exclaimed. 'The effect on public opinion will be prodigious. . . .!' I objected that this was a purely personal telegram, addressed to a mother and not to a Regent. But he insisted with such gushing eloquence that in the end I gave in. . . . Ah, the effect on public opinion! One huge burst of laughter! What an indignity! What vileness! And how I suffered then! And how he suffered too, later on, poor boy,

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when he knew how he had been laughed at! To his dying day those mockeries were always on his mind. . . . And would you like the proof of that? Among the papers found in his wallet, in his breast pocket, when he fell far away among the Zulus, there was a little piece of printed matter, rolled up like a cigarette. It was an article from a Paris newspaper, making mock of him by recalling 'the ball of Saarebrück'!"

For some moments her voice had been trembling, and now tears suddenly flooded her eyes. Silently I took her hand.

By now the sun was low on the horizon; I had no other clue to the hour. Before us the jutting coast was veiled with gold and purple, and the sea, tinged with opalescent hues, lay still. Against this noble scene, the picture of the octogenarian Empress, bowed under the weight of her afflictions, took on a symbolic grandeur in my eyes. I thought of the fatal princesses of Greek tragedy, of Hecuba, Atossa, and the like; I imagined the chorus, concealed behind our semicircle, beneath the pines and cypresses, declaiming some aphorism in the Æschylean vein: 'By all

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the favors enjoyed of mortals the gods are stirred to jealousy and vengeance.'

When she had recovered her calm, I again proposed to go back to the house, apologizing for this violation of the sacrosanct rules of etiquette.

"No," she said. "Grant me a few minutes longer. I do not want to be seen coming back with red eyes."

But we heard a footstep on the gravel. Piétri was approaching respectfully:

"Is the Empress aware that tea is served?"

"What! Tea served? But what time is it?"

"A quarter to six."

So our conversation had lasted for four hours!

While Piétri went off, the Empress led me slowly back towards the house, leaning on my arm. Every now and then we stopped to admire the landscape, its fading colors vanishing sadly into the dusk.

At the foot of a sloping bank she let go my arm and stooped, not without difficulty, over a bed of forget-me-nots. Picking a few flowers, she handed them to me:

"Accept these flowers in remembrance of myself, and likewise of the kindness you have shown me and

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all that you have promised me. . . . Don't forget me!"

When I left Cap Martin to return to Nice, darkness had fallen. Here and there veils of mist were trailing over the sea like great knotted scarves; in slow succession the constellations lit up, one after the other, and across a sky of amethyst the Milky Way traced its pale and wandering path.

Alone in the motor-car, I pondered the brave and heart-rending confession I had just heard. "It will not be a defendant's plea," the Empress had said at the beginning of our talk; "I shall not try to disguise our mistakes and failings, least of all my own; it will be the whole truth, the truth that I should swear to before God. . . ." And she had kept her word, with unwavering frankness, without the slightest equivocation, without the least subterfuge, with recrimination for nobody. Such avowals point to a pride and nobility of spirit beyond the common. Not even in the Empire's most glorious hours, I fancy, not even at its dazzling ceremonies with the diadem on her brow, did the Empress appear more full of majesty.

VIII

Visit to the Emperor Francis Joseph; fifty years of common memories.—Napoleon III and the Austrian alliance.—Malmaison. The execution of the Duc d'Enghien and the condemnation of Orsini.—The drama of Mayerling; reflections of Francis Joseph on the future of his monarchy.—Restoration of Alsace and Lorraine to France.

MONDAY, JULY 16, 1906

THE Empress lately left Cap Martin to return to Farnborough by way of Venice and Austria, and has just reached Paris. She at once sent me word of her desire to see me.

The journey, which was very rapid, seems to have given her fresh life. I found her eyes more lively, her features less drawn, her movements more easy.

"Just guess," she said to me in a clear voice—"guess why I went round by way of Austria. . . . It was to obey the summons of the Emperor Francis Joseph . . .! Yes, we had not had a chance of meeting for ten years—not since a visit he paid me at Cap Martin, where he came to spend a few days

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along with the Empress Elizabeth. And last spring, it appears, he had said to the Princess Metternich: 'Come, come! The Empress Eugénie must be wanting to let me die without seeing her again! As she is such a great traveler, why doesn't she come and see me at Ischl? The Salzkammergut is not so very far off!' This invitation touched me all the more because I have always held Francis Joseph in very high esteem and in deep affection. I regard him as the most venerable of present-day sovereigns, but most majestic, and, no doubt, the best representative of the old monarchical traditions. You know, moreover, that during our own reign I always ardently extolled the Austrian alliance. . . . But politics apart, Francis Joseph and I have plenty of reasons for mutual sympathy and understanding. He has lost his son and his wife in tragic circumstances; I have lost my son and my husband likewise. He is still on his throne while I, for my part, am not more than a poor dethroned sovereign; but he too has known the pain and humiliation of great reverses. Finally, he has continued to bear me the deep gratitude which he bore my husband for the chivalrous and generous welcome he received at their confer-

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ence at Villafranca. And I for my part shall never forget the nobility and kindly tact with which he received the Emperor and myself at Salzburg, soon after Querétaro. . . . So last Wednesday, about eight o'clock in the evening, I arrived at Ischl. Francis Joseph was awaiting me at the station; he had brought his youngest daughter, in attendance, the Archduchess Valerie,¹ his aide-de-camp Count Paar, and a lady-in-waiting. From the station he escorted me to my hotel, the Kaiserin Elisabeth, where I found my rooms full of flowers. Next morning he paid me his official call, and then in the afternoon, in glorious weather, he took me for a long drive in an open carriage. For nearly three hours he took me through the most wonderful hilly and wooded country. Every moment, on these beautiful winding roads, we were passing some waterfall, or crossing some mountain torrent, or skirting a lake. Twice we got down to walk. . . . And what memories we unrolled! The furthest back was dated 1855. Half a century! We spoke quite without reserve; and of course our conversation was not altogether cheerful. I will even admit that I was in-

¹ Born in 1868, married to the Archduke Franz-Salvator.

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wardly somewhat surprised by this; for until this time I had always thought Francis Joseph a rather insensitive man; but I now observed that actions which have touched him personally, for good or for ill, leave an indelible impression on his memory."

What did they talk about "quite without reserve"? Over which chapter of their distant past did they linger with most pleasure or most sorrow, bitterness, or regret? Did they conjure up Solferino, Mexico, Sadowa, Sedan? She did not tell me, and I certainly was not so indiscreet as to ask. But I caught that date, 1855, which she mentioned to me. In the history of the Second Empire it was a critical date: the dreamer of the Tuileries was just then wavering between the immediate realities of the Austrian alliance and the misty enticements of the Italian mirage. All his counselors, including the far-sighted Drouyn de Lhuys, were pushing him towards the alliance; but his fantastic imagination could never resist the allurements of a mirage. However, the Empress continued:

"In the evening I dined at the Imperial residence, in the strictest intimacy, and you know how simple the Austrian Court is in the usual course of its life.

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But Francis Joseph found a means of rendering my vanished sovereignty an act of homage which touched me more than any other could have done—he wore only one decoration on his breast, and it was the placque of the Legion of Honour, with the effigy of Napoleon III. I was very deeply moved. And to make him fully alive to my gratitude I told him the following anecdote:

“In the year 1876 I was visiting Italy with my son, and we stopped for a few days at Florence. King Victor Emmanuel happened to be passing through, and, as usage demanded, came to call on me at my hotel. I returned his courtesy at the Palazzo Pitti. There I was shown into a drawing-room where our conversation was at first very friendly. But before long I noticed, on every wall and every table, portraits which seemed to be gazing ironically at me: the Emperor William, the Prince Royal of Prussia, the King of Saxony, the King of Bavaria, the Grand Duke of Baden, Prince Frederick Charles, Marshal von Moltke, and, very conspicuously, Bismarck. Not one was lacking. They were so numerous as not even to leave one small corner for the victor of Magenta and Solferino. I did not hesitate to show my surprise

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to Victor Emmanuel. He turned very red, and stammered excuses, very commonplace excuses, in which I felt so little conviction that I abruptly rose, bade him farewell, and left without shaking his hand.—After listening to my anecdote with calm dignity, Francis Joseph made a subtle comment to me. ‘Victor Emmanuel,’ he said, ‘often forgot to behave like a gentleman. It was not that he lacked natural nobility; but he was slovenly in his feelings, as he was in his clothes and his bearing.’

“The next day, Friday, I woke in the clouds; the rain was torrential; it was impossible to go out. Then the Emperor came for a long chat with me in my drawing-room, and in the evening I again dined at the Imperial residence; and would you believe that, in spite of the late hour and the fact that he rises at dawn, Francis Joseph assumed the courteous duty, as he had done the evening before, of escorting me back to my hotel, and not only to the door, but right to my apartments? I left Ischl on Saturday morning.”

A special reason, in any case, has brought the Empress to Paris. She has just made an important dona-

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tion to the museum at Malmaison, and her arrival was awaited for the completion of the concluding formalities. By her gift the museum has acquired the portrait, busts, engravings, books, hangings, furniture, and all the Napoleonic relics which Queen Hortense had collected in her melancholy manor of Arenenberg.

In this connection, she expanded with relish on the poetic and reminiscent charm of Malmaison. And I was all the more struck because, until today, she has hardly ever mentioned Napoleon I to me. So I had felt that the image of the Hero held no great place in her mind, whether on account of her avowed cult for Marie Antoinette and her secret devotion to legitimist principles; or because the contrasts between herself and the founder of the dynasty are only too obvious; or perhaps because she saw at the closest quarters the man who, under the Napoleonic mask, proclaimed himself the heir, the successor, the second version of Cæsar Imperator.

"I like Malmaison," she said, "for it is there that the picture of Napoleon emerges most clearly to me, as a real figure, intimate and intelligible. There at least he remains life-size; he does not crush one.

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After all, Austerlitz, Jena, Friedland, Wagram, Moscow, Saint Helena—this is too grandiose, too dazzling, or else too terrible.

"Yes, in the perspective of the years, that extraordinary adventure in our national life takes on a fabulous air. It is no longer history: it already smacks of the myth and the epic."

In recounting the memories that cling about Malmaison, we inevitably saw the ghost of the Duc d'Enghien rising before us, for it was at Malmaison that the fatal decision was taken, and from Malmaison that the final orders were dispatched.

I soon saw that the Empress has a marvelous knowledge of the attempt of March 21, 1804, even of its smallest details. In the whole drama it is the hypocritical and provocative part played by Talleyrand that chiefly rouses her indignation.

"On that day," she said, "M. de Talleyrand touched the very depths of human baseness!"

On the other hand, she feels pity for poor Cambacérès, who tried to make a few words of moderation heard, but only drew on himself Bonaparte's shattering reply: "You have become very miserly of Bourbon blood!"

Afterward she lingered over the scene of Josephine imploring her husband's clemency:

"I too have played that scene myself," she said.

"You, madame! And when was that, pray?"

"After the condemnation of Orsini.¹ . . . You will understand, of course, that I am drawing no parallel between the case of the Duc d'Enghien and that of Orsini. The one had plotted nobody's death; he was guilty only of having fought in the ranks of the *émigrés*. The other boasted his engineering of a plot which numbered no fewer than a hundred and fifty victims. Furthermore, the Duc d'Enghien, was tried secretly, by night, before a military commission, without any of the safeguards laid down by the law, without even the help of an advocate. In Orsini's case, on the contrary, not only were all the legal forms duly observed, but his advocate was even allowed to deliver perhaps the boldest plea of justification ever heard in any court. Well, in spite of all these differences, in spite of the fact that Orsini, far from excusing himself, actually gloried in his crime, I was deeply moved by the nobility of his language, the heroism of his attitude, the supreme dignity of

¹ See Biographical Notes.

his bearing before the assize courts. Would you believe that I wept over it. . . .? Further, after the condemnation I begged the Emperor to grant an immediate pardon. I kept on repeating to him: 'No, you can't send this man to the guillotine! You cannot do it, you of all men! You will never again find such a great opportunity to be magnanimous!' I even wished to go and see Orsini in prison, in the hope of extracting some word of repentance that would have allowed us to save him. It was madness on my part, and the Emperor did well to oppose it. All the same, I felt that in that generous soul of his my appeal to his feelings was beginning to outweigh reasons of state. I am certain I would have triumphed in the end had I not had against me all the Ministers, Fould, Walewski, Rouher, Delangle, Magne, and the rest. They urged that the tide of public opinion was running high against the Italian bandits; that a measure of clemency on behalf of Orsini would look like unpardonable weakness; that immediately the revolutionaries in France would be seen raising their heads; that the future of our dynasty itself was at stake. As the Emperor nevertheless seemed to be leaning towards my plea, the Ministers prevailed on



BUST OF EMPRESS EUGÉNIE
Painted on a plate manufactured at Sèvres

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him to consult his highest dignitaries, the presidents of the Senate and the Legislative Body, the members of the Privy Council, Troplong, Morny, Baroche, Billault, and others. In face of their emphatic protestations the Emperor felt bound to yield. But I think I can say it was on this day that he resolved, in his innermost conscience, on the Italian war."

After this digression by way of Malmaison, the Empress brought me back to Francis Joseph:

"What will happen after his death? Do you believe in the permanence of Austria-Hungary?"

"That will depend on the circumstances in which the succession to Francis Joseph is opened. Despite the growing antagonism between the races, Austria-Hungary seems fit to last a long time yet; for among all these peoples, all at one another's throats, there is a vast reserve of loyalty and attachment to the dynasty. On the other hand, it is easy to foresee such a European crisis as would bring the archaic structure of the Hapsburgs crashing to the ground all at once."

The Empress continued gravely:

"You will not repeat what I am going to tell you. . . . Francis Joseph is persuaded that his monarchy

will not survive him. Last year he was deeply impressed by the astonishing ease with which Norway broke away from Sweden;¹ he saw in that as it were a presage of the way Hungary will take as soon as his eyes are closed. . . . Once the signal has been given by Budapest, we shall see the Bohemian Czechs, the Southern Slavs, the Galician Poles, the Rumanians of Transylvania, all breaking their last links with the Germanic center; and then the whole imperial and royal domain of the Hapsburgs will be shattered. And the dislocation will take place all the faster as the morganatic marriage of the heir, Francis Ferdinand, with the Chotek, is henceforth setting an insoluble problem, because his wife and children will be able to mount the throne of Hungary, but cannot reign either in Bohemia or in Austria.”²

“Did Francis Joseph strike you as greatly discouraged?”

¹ The union of Norway and Sweden was severed on June 7, 1905.

² On July 1, 1900, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the heir-apparent, had made a morganatic marriage with the Countess Sophia Chotek, later created Duchess of Hohenberg. They were assassinated together at Sarejevo on June 28, 1914.

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"Discouraged, no: but melancholy and resigned. . . . But he is carrying out his heavy task as sovereign with no less punctiliousness than he used to show. His professional conscience is admirable. He has been on sentry duty for sixty years now, and is patiently waiting for God to relieve him."

"Dare I ask whether your relations with the Austrian Court have enabled you to penetrate the mystery of Mayerling? Was the Archduke Rudolph murdered by his mistress, or did he kill her in the course of an orgy? Did they commit suicide together? What happened? A heavy veil of shadow and silence was flung like a pall over that sentimental tragedy, and it has never been lifted."

She hesitated for an instant, with drawn eyebrows. Then in a resolute tone she said:

"Yes, I know the truth about the drama of Mayerling. I can even say that no one knows it better than I do, for I had it directly from the Empress Elizabeth, who confided it to me during her last stay at Cap Martin. . . . But this, too, you will not pass on so long as Francis Joseph and I are alive. Here are the facts."

Whereupon, under the dictation of her infallible

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memory, she recounted to me how, about five o'clock on the evening of January 29, 1889, the Emperor Francis Joseph had a very heated interview with his son on the score of Mlle. Vetsera; he even threatened to disinherit him if he did not instantly put an end to this scandalous liaison. So violent was the tone of the Emperor's expression, that the archduke took fright and promised to break with his mistress. But he asked his father's leave to see her again one last time to say good-by; he was already engaged to dine with her that evening in the neighborhood of Vienna, at Mayerling. The Emperor granted it: "Go then, for tonight! But after this you are not to see her again. Don't forget that I have your word of honor, your word as a gentleman." Coming out of the Hofburg, Rudolph took a hackney-cab, driven by the cabman Bratfisch, and was driven to Mayerling, which is about twenty miles from Vienna. There, at a hunting-box, Maria Vetsera was awaiting him for dinner, in company with Prince Philip of Coburg, brother of Ferdinand of Bulgaria, and Count Hoyos, brother of the former Austrian ambassador in Paris. The dinner took place in the quietest fashion; there was no orgy. The only diversion of the guests was

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listening to the cabman, Bratfisch, who was famed for his singing and whistling of Tyrolese airs. . . . At the end of the meal they all retired to their rooms, for they were to set out shooting early next morning. The archduke and Maria Vetsera lodged at one end of the shooting-lodge, Philip of Coburg and Hoyos at the other end. As soon as Rudolph was alone with his mistress he told her of the terrible argument he had had with his father, and of the solemn promise he had been forced to give under the threat of being disinherited. She answered coldly: "I, too, have some news for you. I am pregnant." Whereupon there was a terrible scene of affectionate despair between the two adoring lovers. They kept on saying: "We can't go on living! Let us die in each other's arms! Let us end it all tonight! God have pity on us!" In the paroxysm of their exalted state, Rudolph seized a revolver and killed Maria with a bullet in the breast. Then, taking off her clothes, he laid her out piously on the bed. The room was decorated with some bunches of roses; the archduke took them and heaped them upon the dead woman. After which he wrote his mother a long letter which opened thus: "My dear mother, I no longer have any right

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to live: I have killed. . . ." It was this letter which told the Emperor and Empress the exact course of the drama. About six in the morning Rudolph killed himself with a bullet through the brain. Two hours later the archduke's valet came to rouse his master, and tried in vain to open the door. Getting no reply to his calls, he ran to fetch Philip of Coburg and Hoyos. The three of them raised a ladder against the outside wall and got into the room by smashing the window. . . . When Philip of Coburg and Hoyos told Francis Joseph what had happened, he made them swear that they would never tell anyone the story of that night at Mayerling; and the vow was kept by both.

After warmly thanking the Empress for her revelation, I said:

"All in all, if one forgets for a moment that the chief actor in this melodrama was the heir to a vast empire, there is nothing in it but a commonplace newspaper paragraph, a 'double suicide,' such as those that periodically turn up in the Latin Quarter when the student breaks the news to his little friend that he has had to promise his father to break with her. . . . But the newspaper story rises to the height

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of a tragedy as soon as one reflects on its consequences. The whole future of Austria-Hungary, and therefore the future of Europe, will certainly be influenced by this novelette of Mayerling. One can only repeat with Pascal: 'The effects of love are terrifying. The cause is a *je ne sais quoi*, such a trifle! But this *je ne sais quoi* shakes the whole land, and princes, and the entire world. Had the nose of Cleopatra been shorter, the whole face of the earth would have altered. . . .' And if the nose of Maria Vetsera had been longer. . . ."

"You could go even further back than Cleopatra," said the Empress, laughingly. "Helen of Troy, for instance. . . ."

"Horace went even further back. He contended that 'long ere Helen's day,' the beauty of women had ruled the fate of nations: '*Nam fuit ante Helenam*. . . .' Unhappily, Horace was not at all like Pascal, and sometimes used very plain words; so I leave the question unfinished."

"So be it! I leave Helen and hold to Cleopatra."

With a quick glance at the clock, she added, affectionately:

"Now I must give you your freedom again. But

before I let you go I should like—I should like to have payment for these confidences I've been giving you: so I shall ask you a very indiscreet question, a question that I've been impatient to ask you for a long time."

"I shall answer, if I can, all the questions Your Majesty may wish to ask me."

Then in a quick, urgent voice, she asked:

"In your heart of hearts, in your most secret thoughts, do you think that Alsace and Lorraine will ever be restored to France?"

Leaning towards me, with tense gaze and propping her elbows on her knees, she watched intently for my answer:

"Yes, I believe so quite wholeheartedly. And my belief is no mystical one: it invokes neither the inevitable vengeance of Heaven nor the infallible sanctions of pure justice; it is based simply on positive considerations. The guiding line of these we touched upon a few minutes ago when you told me that Francis Joseph himself no longer believes in the permanence of his monarchy. Moreover, anyone must be blind who does not see that the Balkans and the Danube states are in process of preparing for a

formidable crisis. Every day makes the Jugoslav problem more disturbing; the truce of Mürzsteg¹ is already a thing of the past; this Austro-Russian rivalry is more fully under way than ever. At the same time, we have Germany hastening her expansion in the direction of Constantinople, her *Drang nach Osten*. And so it is very probable that in the more or less near future the general state of peace will be endangered, and that consequently all kinds of new eventualities will appear on the diplomatic chess-board. Cannot we hope that, when that day comes, without even having recourse to war, by the mere dynamic strength of our alliances, we shall regain our lost provinces? In fact, there is no doubt that the solution of the crisis will call for the refashioning of territory, the righting of frontiers, and perhaps for the exchange of colonies. Is it unreasonable to admit that, in such a set of circumstances, Germany, in need of either our help or our neutrality, will think a revision of the Treaty of Frankfurt not too high a price to pay? That is M. Delcassé's whole calcula-

¹ On October 2, 1903, during a meeting between the Emperor Nicholas and the Emperor Francis Joseph at Mürzsteg in Styria, their Foreign Ministers, Counts Goluchowski and Lamsdorff, reached an agreement on Austro-Russian policy in the Balkans.

tion. . . . In its support I could quote the evidence of our former ambassador in Berlin and London, who was in days gone by my first chief at the Direction of Foreign Affairs. I mean the Baron de Courcel, whom I have sometimes mentioned to you; and you know how highly I value the sureness of his judgment and the penetration of his views. Well, one bright June evening of last year, after dining we were walking together down the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, with a mutual friend. We were discussing the Emperor William and the adventures into which his fatuity, his charlatanry, and his unceasing restlessness are always threatening to drag him. M. de Courcel said to me: 'When one has known Bismarck's Germany as I knew it, and compares that with the Germany of today, the shrinkage of her power and prestige is manifest. High as the *Reich* of the Hohenzollerns still stands, it is visibly sloping towards its decline. . . .' And he then described to me the state of Europe as I have just sketched it to you, stressing the fact that by her close union with Austria, Germany is henceforth involved in the Balkan imbroglio: 'And so it is the fate of Germany that is linked with that of Austria. . . .

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This result would have put Bismarck to shame. You recall how in 1884 he scented the Balkan danger—the Bulgaro-Servian cut-throat, he called it. And forthwith he decided that the Berlin-Vienna pact must have its counterpart in a pact between Berlin and St. Petersburg. It was then that, although upholding the Austro-German alliance with the utmost possible show, he had the Machiavellian idea of secretly covering himself on the Russian side by a treaty of counter-assurance. And who but he could have thought of that blessed word “counter-assurance” as a synonym for “felony”? The Franco-Russian alliance and the Anglo-French entente were constantly in his mind. They were his nightmare; he would never have left us time to negotiate them: at the first breath of them, he would have declared war. One day he said to me’—and M. de Courcel concluded in these terms as we were about to part at the corner of the Avenue Marginy—‘If God grants you the normal span of long life, say another score of years, you will see without a doubt the restoration of Alsace and Lorraine to France.’”

Her whole body starting, the Empress flung up

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her head. And with a light shining in her face, she exclaimed:

“How happy it makes me to hear you! What a viaticum you are giving me! When I die I shall at least have this gleam of hope before my eyes. . . .!”

IX

The Regency in 1870. Arrival of the Emperor in Metz: his moral collapse and bodily tortures.—Defeats at Wissembourg, Froeschwiller, Forbach. Fine restraint of the Empress: "The dynasty is doomed; we must now think only of France."—The hecatombs of Borny, Resonville, and Gravelotte; the Rhine army blockaded in Metz.—The march to Sedan; responsibility of the Empress.—Events of September 3rd and 4th. Departure from the Tuileries.—Military and political consequences of the march to Sedan.

T U E S D A Y , J U N E 9 , 1 9 0 8

LAST winter the Empress Eugénie carried out a project which she had long had in mind. She spent three months in Ceylon. On the personal instructions of Edward VII, the British authorities spared no pains to make her stay as attractive and comfortable as possible. The Governor even offered her hospitality in his wonderful residence at Kandy, in the center of the island.

For some days she has been in Paris, where I have just arrived myself on short leave of ab-

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sence.¹ At her invitation I went to see her this afternoon.

I first enjoyed much pleasure in asking her about her journey, for she gave me her account of it with great animation. The light, the mountains and vegetation, the fisheries, gigantic trees, rare flowers, the human types, castes, rites, manners and social problems, the impenetrable mystery of the Hindu mind, the soothing influence of the Buddhist sanctuaries and the sacred pools—all these aspects, all this phantasmagoria of a world so remote from ourselves, have left the most vivid impression on her. I marvel that a woman of her age (eighty-two!) should still keep her spirit of inquiry so alert and many-sided.

Abruptly this spirit of inquiry turned towards Bulgaria. Through the correspondents of *The Times*, the Empress is quite familiar with the chessboard of the Balkans and the complex game of rivalries which cut across one another from the Bosphorus to the Danube, from the Black Sea to the Adriatic, and behind which one can see the immemorial duel of Slavs and Teutons, the irreconcilable enmity of Russia and

¹ From January 29, 1907, I had been French minister in Sofia.

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Austria. But she is principally interested in the person of Prince Ferdinand.¹

"I often spoke of him," she said, "with his aunt, my good friend Queen Victoria. And every time she referred to him in the most scornful terms: 'He is cowardly, treacherous, vain, and corrupt. . . . Besides, the Roman Catholic Church has excommunicated him.' As for King Edward, I asked him one day what he thought of his cousin, and he replied: 'Ferdinand? I regard him as capable of any crime. To gratify his ambition or his spite, he would set fire to the four corners of Europe, if it were in his sole power to do so. . . .'"

"Oh, madame, how happy he would be to hear you! He knows his reputation for satanic Machiavellianism, and derives the most acute pleasure from it, for he really is very corrupt, extremely decadent. But I should have too much to say on the picturesque-ness of his personality, the bizarre subtleties of his tastes, the tortuous maze of his mind, and on all that

¹ Ferdinand of Coburg, born on February 26, 1861, was elected Prince of Bulgaria on July 7, 1887. Proclaimed Tsar of the Bulgars on October 5, 1908, he was forced to abdicate on October 3, 1918.

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is shifting and equivocal, impulsive and crafty, in his character."

"Does he amuse you much?"

"He does not amuse me; he disturbs me. . . . As he is madly ambitious, is the absolute master of his people, and has a superb army in his hands, he is a continual danger to the peace of Europe. . . . The immediate goal of his ambitions—and he will reach it very soon—is to break the last links of vassaldom, fictitious and purely nominal though they are, which still bind Bulgaria to Turkey. But to him that is only a prelude, an appetizer. The main object of his greed, the intoxicating dream of his life, is the crown of Byzantium."

"Has he admitted that to you?"

"He never admits anything! At the most he lets one guess!"

"How did he manage that on this occasion?"

"In quite a neat roundabout way. . . . He summoned me to talk over some trifling incident, which according to himself was absorbing his attention, and brought me on some vague pretext into a small drawing-room in his private apartments. There, on the wall in front of me, while he laid forth on the sub-

ject of his concern, I could see a picture representing the Bosphorus, Constantinople, Saint Sophia, the Great Wall, the Golden Horn, the Asiatic shore, and over and above all this panorama, up amid the lightnings of an apocalyptic sky, the victorious prancing of a resplendent horseman—Tsar Ferdinand! I had no difficulty in understanding. . . . Then, another time, he spread himself in fulsome eulogies of Abdul Hamid, 'the Sultan of Sultans, lord of Mecca and Stambul . . . my imperial suzerain, my imperial master . . . a delightful potentate! We get on so well together!' After which dithyramb he told me how, on his last visit to the Palace of Gildiz Kiosk, he had asked permission to enter Saint Sophia alone and spend half an hour there, in order to be able to admire the matchless edifice quite unhampered. The delightful potentate complied, on condition only that, to avoid transgressing the code of Islam, an officer of his bodyguard—a Mussulman, of course—should stand inside the mosque; but so as not to disturb the movements and meditation of the august visitor, he was to stand against the door. Then Ferdinand continued: 'You may imagine my delight at finding myself alone under that marvelous dome, on

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the spot where the entry of the Turks, on May 29, 1653, abruptly interrupted the Mass at the sublime movement of the Elevation. . . . But let me tell you just why I begged Abdul Hamid for the favor of walking alone in Saint Sophia. I wanted to fix the position, from some clues I had, of a certain slab of porphyry which marks the place occupied by the Byzantine autocrats during religious services. And so, while the Sultan's officer, glued to his door, was watching me with an air of speechless stupefaction, I took my cane and pushed back one of the mats covering the floor. I thus disclosed the slab of porphyry on which the *Basileus* Justinian planted his feet, shod in the imperial purple. And I too, I too set my feet on the slab of porphyry!—Such are the chimeras on which he nourishes his turbulent and wily imagination.”

“I now understand what King Edward was driving at. . . . But are there no means of working on Ferdinand to make him keep quiet?”

“I see only one: to touch on one of his most sensitive chords, I mean his very just awareness of his political ability. That is the method I usually adopt with him. I never lose an opportunity of telling him:

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'During the twenty-one years that you have spent on the throne you have done an admirable work. When one calls to mind the misery and anarchy which were consuming Bulgaria when you came to her, her present-day prosperity almost surpasses understanding. But that did not satisfy you. You needed also the prestige of territorial expansion, the glory of uniting under your scepter all the scattered sections of the Bulgarian people. Well, so be it! But to carry out this noble task you were not going to find it necessary to plunge into warlike adventurings; you would bring it about, with much less risk, by the force of diplomacy; for on that field your virtuosity is unchallenged. So, thanks to you, Bulgaria was thenceforth in one of those situations which, as Talleyrand said, "develop by themselves." Do not precipitate matters. . . . Besides, it would be practically impossible for you to make war on the Turks without putting yourself in vassalage to Austria or to Russia. And you may be very sure that in the moment of the final settlement Vienna and St. Petersburg would be reconciled over your prostrate body. There is only one thing more dreadful for an earthenware pot than

fighting an iron pot, and that is, being squeezed between two iron pots.' ”

“Your advice strikes me as very judicious. How did he receive it?”

“Outwardly Ferdinand seemed to agree with me; but I have no great hopes of converting him. This obsession of the Byzantine dream is too firmly anchored in his brain. Megalomania is an incurable psychosis.”

From the sovereign we passed to the people of Bulgaria, a rough and vigorous race, dogged and concentrated, fierce and vindictive. “I reign over wolves,” Prince Ferdinand said to me lately.

But we soon finished with the Bulgar theme. Showing no trace of weariness after our already lengthy conversation, the Empress then asked me:

“As you have leisure at Sofia, have you made use of it to read Émile Ollivier’s volumes on the Second Empire?”

“Yes, I read them with attention, but I could not overcome the antipathy which the author inspires in me. It is not the man himself, of course, the perfectly respectable private person, whom I accuse; it is the statesman. I cannot recognize in him any of

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the qualities required in the handling of great public interests—qualities which mark out the chiefs of government among their fellows. He has never learned anything in the school of experience and observation, and I see in him nothing beyond a clumsy utopian, a presumptuous windbag.”

“You deal severely with him.”

“I fear having to judge him still more sternly when the time comes for him to explain his responsibilities in the war of 1870, which cannot be very long delayed: his last chapter, which has just appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, breaks off just after the plebiscite. . . . And what does Your Majesty think of him?”

She gave a mischievous smile:

“I prefer not to answer!”

“Then I shall permit myself another question to you, madame. Two years ago at Cap Martin, you were good enough to confide in me some of your recollections of the events of 1870. We stopped at the beginning of the war, at the battle of Saarebrück. I should value very highly the chance of hearing you speak of your period as Regent!”

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"Oh, I am quite ready to answer you on that! Put your questions."

I reflected quickly, and then asked:

"When did you first have the impression that we were engaged in a terrible duel from which we possibly should not emerge victorious?"

"Very early! As soon as the Emperor had reached Metz! His taking over of the command disclosed a lamentable state of affairs: nothing anywhere but disorder, incoherence, delay, quarrels, and confusion. The letters I had from him quite overwhelmed me; they left me positively crippled. . . . What perturbed me most was that our strategic offensive, on which we founded such high hopes, was becoming more difficult every day. I soon realized that the Emperor no longer had it in mind. I knew, on the other hand, that he was suffering cruelly from his bodily miseries, and I could guess how his moral vigor, his energy and confidence, must be feeling the effects. But was not all our vacillation going to leave the Germans the immense advantage of being the first to cross the frontier? What a humiliation for us in the eyes of the foreign powers! For according to our own declarations they were waiting to

see us leap upon the enemy, and perhaps even end the war within a few days with a veritable thunderbolt! But just at this moment two grave cares arrived to beset us in the diplomatic field. We first learned that Austria and Italy were edging away from our alliance, and thus their military help, on which our whole plan of operation depended, was failing us at the eleventh hour. At the same time, Bismarck published the secret treaty which we had mistakenly proposed to him after Sadowa, when he had so deceitfully led us to believe that he was ready to abandon Belgium to our grasp. And this publication kindled the anger of the whole of Europe against us, as if we had been planning an act of brigandage. . . . Finally, on August 4th, one of our divisions, which had ventured too far on the frontier, was caught and destroyed at Wissembourg. From a strategic point of view, the affair was of no importance, and our staff saw in it no more than a mere vanguard skirmish. But I was nevertheless overwhelmed, for private reasons, by strange coincidences: you know that I am very superstitious."

"Is the story true, madame, that one day at Saint-Cloud, during a luncheon at which your Ministers

were present, tears were seen suddenly pouring down your cheeks?"

"Yes, I remember that. I was so sorely stricken, that day! I had the most dreadful presentiments; I saw as it were a death's-head on everything around me; I was waiting in horrible anguish for the fatal message which I felt was on its way. . . . On August 6th, towards midnight, I had just gone to my room and was preparing to go to bed, when my maid told me that the Marquis de Piennes, the chamberlain on duty, insisted on my seeing a very important telegram. I dressed again quickly, very quickly, and told them to bring in M. de Piennes. Before he could even speak, I snatched the telegram from his hands and read it: it was the news of Froeschwiller and Forbach! The message ended with this sentence: '*Paris must be put into a state of defense immediately.*' Thus in the space of one single day, two great defeats, Alsace lost, Lorraine invaded, the road to Châlons open, the capital threatened! In a flash I saw the abyss yawning, and thought I should swoon. But suddenly I felt as if I were raised above myself, and I said to Piennes: 'The dynasty, sir, is doomed; we must now think only of France!' I then

decided to return at once to the Tuileries, where I had the Ministers summoned for two o'clock that morning."

After thirty-eight years, the memory of that dramatic night still roused such turmoil in her mind that her hands were quivering and her eyes full of terror. While she sat breathless for a moment, I went on:

"I lately heard all that Your Majesty has just told me, from Princess de Metternich at the home of Mme. de Pourtalès. On the following day M. de Piennes had reported your splendid words to the princess: 'The dynasty, sir, is doomed; we must now think only of France.' "

Not heeding this irrefutable confirmation of a saying that does her so much honor, she continued:

"When I reached the Tuileries about one o'clock in the morning, I was a different woman. I was no longer agonized, no longer excited, no longer weak. I felt calm and strong, I was lucid and resolved. . . ."

She emphasized this sudden recovery of strength, this astounding burst of light, which at that moment

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rose and filled her whole being, and which she finds akin to the mysterious actions of divine grace.

"How do you explain such an abrupt reversal?" she asked me.

"It is a familiar phenomenon to the psychologists," I answered. "The slightest emotional shock is sometimes enough to free all the energies, conscious or subconscious, which ancestry has accumulated in one's being. It was your Castilian heredity that cried out so loud. . . . And I would add that for a proud nature like yours there is no worse torture than suspense and uncertainty. Such natures are worn out by anxiety. But the moment their duty takes clear form, the moment they see the chance of action, they unfold in all their splendor."

"You alluded to my Castilian heredity. That reminds me of how I was straining every nerve during that tragic night to revive confidence and courage in those around me, and of the exclamation of the good and noble-hearted Admiral Jurien de la Gravière, my chief aide-de-camp. 'Madame,' he exclaimed, 'at this moment you are like one of Corneille's heroines!'"

"The admiral was mistaken!"

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"Oh! And I was so proud of his exclamation! How was he mistaken?"

"I do not deny that the heroines of Corneille are sublime. But they are logic-choppers. They discourse and split an infinite number of hairs concerning their duty. Even in their most pathetic moment they are still argumentative. They are no longer women; they are abstractions:

*"Impitoyable sort, dont la rigueur sépare
Ma gloire d'avec mes désirs!
Est-il dit que le choix d'une vertu si rare
Coûte à ma passion de si grands déplaisirs?"*¹

And it is the Infanta of Castile, the rival of Chimène, who argues thus! What shall I say of Camille or of Pauline?—Well, in your case reasoning played no part. Your deep-rooted energies woke up spontaneously, and that is something truly beautiful!"

She laughed:

"Well, I shall not boast again of having been com-

¹ Pitiless fate, whose rigor tears apart my glory from my desires! Is it declared that the choice of so rare a virtue must cost my passion such sore distresses?

pared to the heroines of Corneille!—But let us go back to the tragic days.”

Without the slightest effort, and with a memory that never once stumbled, she told me the story of the obscure and eventful crisis which ended on August 9th with the dismissal of the Émile Ollivier Ministry. Among other details I note these: On her return to the Tuileries the Empress wished to convoke the Chambers, in order to take her stand immediately on national representation. Had she the right as Regent to order this convocation? Ought she not to have referred it to the Emperor? It was arguable. Émile Ollivier maintained with great gestures that the convocation of the parliamentary body remained the absolute prerogative of the Emperor. He further declared that it would be an enormous mistake, an absurdity, to reopen the tribune in an hour of national peril, when it was above all things necessary to avoid disorder and to soothe excited spirits. With this he had no doubt that the Emperor would agree.

“But his real objection,” said the Empress, “and what he refrained from admitting to us, was that he was sure of being overturned at the first sitting, for

he had become extremely unpopular, and both Senators and Deputies felt ashamed of having put their trust in him. . . . Faced with the prospect of certain downfall, he talked and grew excited, like one out of his wits. To retain power he was ready for any denial of his political creed. Do you know what he had the brazenness to suggest to me? He, the champion of representative government, the prime mover in the "Liberal Empire"! Guess! A *coup d'état* against the parliament! He had conceived of nothing less than the abduction, by night, of all the opposition Deputies, Jules Favre, Gambetta, Jules Simon, Kératry, Arago, Jules Ferry, and the rest; he was to have them taken to la Rochelle and thence by warship to the Ile de Ré! Don't imagine that this was just an idea running through his head. He had given his orders to the police officials and prepared all the details of the arrests. When he came to tell me of this—for in the end he had been obliged to tell me—I said to him: 'And do you imagine that the opposition will let this go through? That the faubourgs of Paris won't rise? That Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux, Saint-Étienne, Limoges will keep calm? Don't you see that you will be unchaining

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civil war throughout the country, and under the enemy's fire? No, sir, no! So long as I am Regent, this will not be done!' He left me very much crest-fallen."

When the question of naming the new Cabinet arose, the Empress met the same constitutional obstacle as in the summoning of the Chambers: the appointment of Ministers undeniably exceeded her power as Regent.

"No matter!" she told me, "I went straight on. . . . I have been blamed for not consulting the Emperor. But I had no time. In any case, the Emperor was crushed by the cares of command and stricken by physical pain, and he could not have reviewed the whole situation with the freedom of mind and the exact information which I had at my own disposal. . . . I remember that when I was just about to sign the decrees of nomination, one of my most devoted collaborators implored me to have nothing to do with it: 'For pity's sake, do not sign that! It is illegal, it is revolutionary!'—'So much the worse!' I answered. 'My conscience bids me sign: I will sign . . . I shall explain matters to the Emperor later!'"

The dry, decisive tone in which she uttered these

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last words, throwing back her head, made me feel that our conversation had touched on one of the most vexed problems left by this period. It may be formulated thus: There was a day when the Empress Eugénie became aware that the physical and moral enfeebling of Napoleon III no longer allowed him any effort of will, and that he had become as incapable of ruling his Empire as of commanding his troops. Did she not, from that day, conclude that it was her duty to eliminate him by degrees from power, to substitute herself for him, and to concentrate in her own hands all the prerogatives of sovereign authority, and all this with the secret and obsessing idea of safeguarding the birthright of her son?

It was on this that I pondered while she told me of the very active start of the Ministry presided over by General de Palikao. The new Ministers' first step was to impose on the Emperor the deprivation of his general-in-chief, the unfortunate Lebœuf; and they brought him to the position of resigning the supreme command of the army and transferring it to Bazaine.¹ The name of Bazaine made me start, and the Empress said:

¹ See Biographical Notes.

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"I assure you that Bazaine at this date inspired absolute confidence."

"In spite of Mexico!"

"Yes, in spite of Mexico. And the proof is that the Emperor had given him command of the Imperial Guard. . . . Moreover, I never did believe that he was a traitor. But we shall talk of Bazaine again."

She then ran quickly through the measures of political, military, and financial order which the Cabinet of August 10th contrived, with untiring zeal, for organizing the national defense and strengthening public spirit.

But behind the scenes I saw the hands of the real masters of the hour, the members of the Privy Council, shelved since the advent of the Liberal Empire, the old servants of the absolute power, Baroche, La Valette, Persigny, Marshal Vaillant, and above all, their principal leader, the able and vigorous advocate of Napoleonic autocracy and president of the Senate, Rouher. The Regent was drawing her inspiration only from them, and trusted only in them.

Round Metz, however, the situation was suddenly becoming more grave. On August 18th, after the terrible massacres of Borny, Rezonville, and Saint-

Privat, the army of the Rhine was blockaded. Two days before the closing of the German pincers, Napoleon III managed to escape dismally along the Verdun road and reached Châlons, where Mac-Mahon, vanquished at Froeschwiller, had succeeded in rallying his troops.

"It was then," continued the Empress, "that the Emperor, still under the malign influence of Prince Napoleon, decided to return to Paris with Mac-Mahon's army, to put himself again at the head of the government. The telegram informing me of this decision also told me that General Trochu ¹ had been appointed governor of the capital. . . . The choice of Trochu seemed to me a grave error. Truly, all the evil in Prince Napoleon's disposition was required to conceive of trusting the security of the sovereign, and the defense of our institution, to a general who was ambitious, prone to intrigue, jealous, treacherous, and theatrical, one who did not conceal his hatred of me and had already joined hands with our worst enemies. But nevertheless, I should have come to terms with this dangerous Tarufe. What I could not approve, however, what

¹ See Biographical Notes.

seemed to me morally and materially impossible, was the Emperor's return to Paris. He would have been accused of reluctance to march to the help of Bazaine, of thinking only of the safety of his throne and his dynasty. The cry of 'Treason!' would have been raised. The whole population of Paris would have mobbed him. No escort could have protected him. His carriage would not have reached the Louvre. He never would have returned to the Tuileries alive!"

While she spoke thus, pale and gasping, I felt passing through her all the horror of the great dramas of revolutions. After a short silence, she resumed in a calmer tone:

"That is why I wanted the Emperor to lead the army, no longer towards Paris, but northwards to help Bazaine. And this was the opinion of all the Ministers as well."

Whereupon she looked me straight in the face, as if challenging me to reply.

"I can understand, madame, that the Emperor could not return to Paris before restoring his authority by a victory. But what I find infinitely regrettable—you will pardon my saying it—is the dispatch

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of the army towards the north. All strategists condemn that maneuver."

She made a gesture of annoyance.

"I have just told you that the Emperor could *not* return to Paris."

"The Emperor, yes. But the army?"

"He could not leave the army!"

I hinted that, in the wretched state of his health, he might legitimately have gone to snatch some rest at Compiègne, at Blois, or at Biarritz.

A quick flame darted through her eyes:

"Leave his troops on the eve of battle! He, a Napoleon! He would have covered himself with shame before history for evermore! I would rather he had killed himself!"

"He did think of that, did he not?"

"Yes, but later—at the last stage of his calvary, at Sedan."

Now we had reached the tragic epilogue of the reign. I asked the Empress how and on what day she received the news of the catastrophe. It has been declared that she kept it dark for twenty-four hours, even from her Ministers, so as not to hamper a supreme effort she was making in the direction of

M. Thiers, with Mérimée as her go-between, to save the Imperial régime. In emphatic tones she declared to me:

"It was on Saturday, September 3rd, towards the close of the afternoon, that Chevreau, the Minister of the Interior, came to inform me of the capitulation at Sedan. On M. Thiers' word it has been published that I had known the sinister news for twenty-four hours and had kept it secret, kept it for myself alone, because I was negotiating with the Deputies of the left, with M. Thiers among them, a parliamentary combination on which I had put my last hope of saving the dynasty. Well! The whole of that story is false. It contains not one word of truth! It is a lie of M. Thiers'. Besides, I never imagined that M. Thiers was generous or noble-hearted enough to forget his spite and come to my aid. I never should have demeaned myself so far as to ask his help."

"What! Then it is not true that Mérimée called on M. Thiers on your behalf on September 3rd, to induce him to rally to you, and that M. Thiers answered him: 'After Sedan, nothing can be done! Let them clear out!'"

"It is false, utterly false! I never gave Mérimée

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any mission of any sort. Besides, he knew my feelings too well to undertake such overtures without my orders."

Anxious to bring all the details of these historic dates into the light of day, I asked her another question:

"On that afternoon of September 3rd, how far did your latest news of the army take you?"

"On that I cannot be so precise. But I do remember that for three or four days I had received no telegrams, no letters, from the Emperor. And that prolonged and inexplicable silence kept me in a frightful state of anguish; I could not eat, I could not sleep; I was endlessly choked with sobs. . . . I think I also remember that on the previous evening, which would be September 2nd, the actual day of the capitulation, General de Palikao said to me: 'Our communications with Sedan are cut. I am afraid the army may be surrounded in the place.' Finally, I had just learned that my son, who could not safely remain at headquarters and had been lodged at Mézières, had had to leave abruptly for Landrecies; so I concluded that the enemy could no longer be far from Mézières. . . . That was all that I knew by the late

afternoon of September 3rd, when Chevreau brought me the Emperor's telegram: *'The army has been captured. I have had to surrender my sword. I have just seen King William and am leaving for Wilhelmshöhe.'* Chevreau left me at once to go and communicate the tidings to his colleagues. I instantly summoned my secretaries, Conti and Filon. I summoned them with cries, as one cries for help. I showed them the telegram. And then . . . and then, everything that lay on my heart burst out. . . . I shall not tell you more."

What she was unwilling to tell me I know from another confidence, which I regard as having the full value and stamp of a direct confession. It was this: under the shock of this shattering news, after the bewilderment and suffocation of the first moments, the Empress gave free vent to the floods of anger, revolt, and humiliation which for weeks had been running higher and higher in her tempestuous soul. With convulsed features and haggard eyes, like a Fury she screamed her distracted words: "No, the Emperor has not surrendered! A Napoleon never surrenders! He is dead! Do you hear me? I tell you he is dead and they're trying to hide it from

me!" Then contradicting herself: "Why didn't he kill himself? Why didn't he have himself buried under the walls of Sedan? Could he not feel he was disgracing himself? What a name to leave to his son!" And after this outburst she collapsed into tears, invoking her husband on her knees, imploring him to forgive the aberration which excessive grief had torn from her. . . . And the scene ended in a swoon.

Of the events of September 4th she told me nothing that is not known. I note all the same that, after hearing Mass in the morning with some intimates, she regained full control of herself, just as on the day after Froeschwiller and Forbach.

But meanwhile the scourge of revolution was preparing in the faubourgs. Every quarter of an hour brought its sinister tidings to the Tuileries. Under the complaisant eye of General Trochu, the revolt was spreading and taking shape. Frantic bands of men hustled the police and paraded the boulevards. In the Legislative Body deliberations were proceeding on the vacancy on the throne, and the precedents of 1814 were evoked as if in a search for the best formula of perjury.

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The Regent kept her calm and dignity undiminished. When the delegates from the Chamber, headed by Buffet, the Comptes Daru and d'Ayguevives, and the Marquis de Talhouët, came to ask her to hand over executive power to a commission of government, to be elected by the Assembly, she impassively refused, for the highest reasons: "The future of our dynasty no longer counts with me; I think solely of the future of France. My one personal concern is to fulfill the whole scope of duties imposed on me by my rank and function: and the clearest of these duties is not to desert my post. . . . As for the representatives of the country, their duty seems to me as evident as my own: they must postpone their party quarrels and close the ranks around me to make a rampart against the invasion. They hold the destiny of the war in their hands. . . ."

She told me of this grave discussion with perfect simplicity. When she stopped I continued:

"One day about ten years ago, I had the opportunity of hearing the austere Buffet himself declare that in that conference of September 4th your energy, patriotism, and coolness were admirable."

"I did what I could . . . and what a result!"

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Then, visibly impatient to have done with it, she quickly sketched all that followed: the proclamation of deposition and of the Republic; the invasion of the Legislative Body; the troops throwing down their arms; General Trochu haranguing the mob and going over to the rebels; the tide of insurgents rushing towards the Tuileries—and so on. She hastened her account still more in picturing her precipitate departure from the palace with her reader, Mme. Lebreton, under escort of Nigra, Metternich, and two or three faithful adherents; her interminable cab-drive round Paris, seeking a safe shelter; the humiliating last resort of being obliged to ask shelter of Dr. Evans, the American dentist; the pitiful trip to Deauville in a closed landau with the dentist on the box; the crossing of the Channel on a forty-ton yacht in a raging sea; and the last horrible distresses of a midnight landing on the Isle of Wight.

Having finished her recital, she remained silent and thoughtful for a moment. Then suddenly her face assumed a look of astonishment, as if she were emerging from some strange reflection.

“Why does it do me good to tell you of this nightmare?” she asked.

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"Perhaps because you are always thinking of it."

"That is true, I am always thinking of it!"

Again she reflected, and then:

"I have such faith in the justice of God that I ought to think little of the justice of men, especially as I shall not be long in appearing before Him. But no! I am weak and illogical enough to be constantly brooding on the verdict which the tribunal of history will bring in. And so when the chance offers itself—which is rarely, very rarely—I bring forward my testimony, after vowing to myself to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. . . . And today, you are the clerk of the court."

I thanked her for the confidence with which she honored me, and she replied to my thanks with a few words of affection. This was the end of my visit.

When I emerged from the Hôtel Continental it was six o'clock.

The afternoon was closing in radiance, the Tuileries bathed in a light of enchantment. Freshened by the continual rains of the last few days, the green of the plane trees and the chestnuts was cool

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and tender. The happy cries of children and the bright clothes of women filled the garden with life. Without stopping, I reached the quiet terrace on the water's edge, which stretched before me in solitude and silence.

Napoleon III used often to come and stroll here of a morning, smoking his never-ending cigar. The iron gates were then closed at each end of the terrace, so that nobody should disturb the august dreamer.

After what I had just heard, this background was singularly fitting to conjure up his image. And yet it is not here, it is not on the flat banks of the Seine, that he appears before me; it is on those steep and winding valley-slopes of the Meuse, while he marches, or rather is dragged along, towards Sedan. No longer ruling his Empire, no longer commanding his troops, pushed in among the baggage and the convoys, he is physically no more than a poor rag of humanity. His hair has gone quite white. The tumors of his eyelids seal his eyes. His face is ashen, his back bent double. The least jolting of his carriage wrenches a groan from his lips. He can only sit astride a horse at the price of atrocious stabs of

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pain. One day he is seen abruptly leaving his coach to go and lean his head against a tree, so sorely is he tortured by the spasms of his bladder and the rending of his loins. Another day, at table, his aides-de-camp see him suddenly shaken by intense shivering, while the tears pour down his hollow purplish cheeks. And finally, when he rises every morning, and every evening when he arrives at the halting-place, his surgeon inflicts on him the torture of a catheter.

Mentally, the ordeal is even worse. His intelligence is left undiminished, his spirit remains perfectly lucid. But he is no longer capable of a decision; he submits to anything, no matter what; there is a total paralysis of will. From the first moment he knows that the army's march northward is a strategic folly, and resigns himself to it. Yet he would only have to say to MacMahon, "Bring back the army on Paris at once," and the army would at once about turn. Similarly, he would only have to telegraph to the Empress, "I shall return to Paris this evening," and nobody in the world could forbid him to return there. For, after all, he is still Emperor! On the evening of the capitulation he will

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write those stupefying lines which leave nothing further to be guessed at in the drama of his soul: "The catastrophe was bound to come. Our march was the height of imprudence; moreover, it has been very badly carried out. . . ." A few days more and he will be writing further: "The struggle was certainly unequal, but it could have been much less disastrous to our arms had not the operations been constantly subordinated to political considerations. . . ." I do not know, in all the history of ill-starred sovereigns, a more lamentable collapse. And if now I wished to round off, I could find but one word—the great word of pity that Sophocles bestowed upon *Cedipus*: "Hapless, hapless! 'Tis the sole name that I can give thee!"

But I also recall a conversation which I had two or three years ago, with our chief-of-staff, General Brun, regarding the march to Sedan. He cited that march to me as an illustration, one day when he was examining before me certain eventualities of war. "One could only be mad," he said, "to send the army of Châlons towards the Argonne and the Meuse. The operation was impossible of execution, especially with a commander so slow and timid and

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perplexed as MacMahon. To make it succeed would have needed nothing less than the impetuous boldness of a Frederick the Great or a Napoleon I. MacMahon's original idea, which he was forced to abandon at the instance of Palikao, was the only true one, the only one which could still check us on our rush towards the abyss. The army was to have withdrawn, in *échelon* formation, right to the walls of Paris. There it would have offered battle, firmly supported on the defensive works but still keeping its freedom of maneuver. In the event of failure, it was again to have withdrawn, still in the *échelon* formation, towards the Loire or the Yonne, and if need be even into Touraine or the Morvan. Thereupon the siege of Paris would be impossible; national resistance would have time to be organized; public spirit would revive. Thus the whole face of the war would have completely changed. And when the time of peace came, we should not have been delivered up to Germany, bound hand and foot!"

X

Magenta and Solferino.—The burning scar. February 24, 1848, and September 4, 1870: the departure in a hackney-cab.

SUNDAY, JUNE 27, 1909

SUMMONED to Paris a few days ago to confer with my Minister, Pichon, on the course of events in the Balkan Peninsula,¹ I learned that the Empress Eugénie was at the Hôtel Continental and wished to see me.

She barely left me time to kiss her hand and take the seat which she pointed to, before instantly beginning her brief, quick, staccato questioning:

"Well now, and what is going on in the Balkans? Are you not startled by this sudden outburst of Turkish fanaticism? And what do you conjecture of your mysterious Tsar Ferdinand's plans? Is he

¹ On April 13, 1909, a fanatical and military counter-revolution had expelled from Constantinople the "Young Turk" politicians who had usurped power in July, 1908. It had then de-throned the Sultan Abdul Hamid and set up Mahomet V in his place. It was feared that Bulgaria might profit by these happenings to invade Macedonia and so provoke a general conflict.

still dreaming of a coronation in Saint Sophia? Is he going to fall upon Byzantium?"

I explained the situation in summary terms:

"The grave point, the only grave point, is the growing rivalry of Austria and Russia in the Balkan Peninsula. . . . At the beginning of the Turkish crisis I found proof that the Russian government was exciting Bulgarian voracity by underhand means. M. Isvolski ¹ on several occasions made Ferdinand's ears glow with the words of the tempter: 'The day is at hand for Bulgaria to fulfill her historic duty in the Balkans. If she does not fulfill it, her future as a nation is at an end. . . .' But Count Aerenthal ² strikes me as superior to M. Isvolski in the part of Macbeth's witches, and it is my impression that henceforth Austria has hold of King Ferdinand, and sooner or later will force him willy-nilly to enter the game of her Eastern policy. That is what I have told M. Pichon."

"Do you believe in a great war in the near future?"

"Not for some years. . . . The scenario of the tragedy is at present only sketched out. What we are

¹ M. Isvolski was then Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

² Then Minister of Foreign Affairs in Austria.

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witnessing is merely the setting of the scene, not the rise of the curtain."

But suddenly, after a silence, the Empress's face grew stern and somber, I might almost say ferocious. And in a bitter tone she said:

"I am particularly grieved just now; I even feel as if I had a running sore. France is too unjust! she has too short a memory!"

"And why, madame?"

"Why? Because nobody, either in the government or among those who express public opinion—nobody, I say—has so much as thought of celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Magenta and Solferino! And yet these were both splendid victories which take their place of honor beside Fontenoy, Jemappes, Fleurus, Arcola, Rivoli, Marengo, Wagram! But no! The Second Empire is officially deleted from the history of France, and so the dates of June 4 and 24, 1859, no longer kindle a memory in the hearts of Frenchmen. . . . What a shame! What ingratitude! Was it to witness this that God has made me live so long?"

Taking breath for a moment, she went on in a still more acid tone, and with quivering fingers:

"I bear the French people no grudge because, under the shock of defeat, on the morrow of Sedan, they overwhelmed my husband and myself with the full flood of their wrath; nor even because, without even wishing to hear us, they held us solely responsible for all their woes. They were so abruptly surprised by the catastrophe; and we had inspired them with such faith in the grandeur and power of France! They fell from so high! But now, thirty-nine years have passed! Thirty-nine years—more than a third of a century! And the injustice persists! The brilliant and glorious achievements of our reign are systematically forgotten, just as if the whole history of the Second Empire could show nothing but Mexico, Sadowa, and Sedan! Is it not abominable? Will the hour of justice and recompense never strike for us?"

In these terms she gave passionate vent to her feelings, her head held high, her voice quavering, her breath hardly sufficing her; and on the pale mask of her face two great tears flowed down the furrows of its lines. The sight of this irremediable grief brought to my mind a great vision from the realms of art—the incurable grief of Amfortas in the first act of "Parsifal":

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"The burning wound reopens;

The burning wound will bleed for ever. . . !"

Little by little, however, her calm and dignity reasserted themselves. To help to ease her tension she even rose from her armchair and led me over to the window, which was wide open on the Rue de Rivoli.

"Let us take the air for a moment," she said. "That will do me good: I let myself go too far just now. . . . Afterward I shall set you at liberty again."

I stepped out with her on to the balcony. The day was ending in a blaze of splendor, and under the tawny rays of the sun, already framing itself in the Arc de Triomphe, the patterned paths of the Tuileries lay like streams of gold.

Was it the eloquence of the place? For suddenly the Empress reverted to her thoughts of bitterness. She pointed her outstretched finger towards the Place de la Concorde, at the grill of the old Pont-Tournant, between the two equestrian groups of Coysevox.

"Do you see those steps down there, behind that clump of trees?"

"Yes, madame."

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"Well, that is where King Louis Philippe and Queen Amélie climbed into a hackney-cab, on February 24, 1848."

Then pointing in the opposite direction, to the part of the Louvre over which rises the tower of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, she continued:

"And it was there, on September 4, 1870, that *I* climbed into a hackney-cab. . . . Yet how often the Emperor and I had said to each other: 'Ah! They won't see *us* slipping away in a cab: it is too ridiculous, too ignominious! We'd rather be murdered on the steps of the throne!' But all the same I did slip away in a cab!"

And with a sarcastic laugh she conjured up the details of her swift, hustled, pitiful flight. . . . To divert the channel of her thoughts a little, I continued:

"The great dramatist of history is always malignly gleeful in his ironical stress on the common humanity of kings before the tricks and shames of fortune. Philippe de Comines, a very acute observer, had already noted this, and added a lesson of high human and political morality. One day when Louis XI was giving way to bursts of throaty laughter over a mis-

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hap that had befallen his mortal foe, Charles the Bold, some one brought tidings of a very similar mishap that had just befallen Louis himself. And the moral drawn by Philippe de Comines was this: "In that way did God shew him that He does not willingly see princes make mock one of another."

XI

*Meeting with the Emperor William at Bergen.—
Friendship with Queen Victoria.*

W E D N E S D A Y, J U N E 1 2, 1 9 1 2

LAST January the Empress Eugénie sent me her affectionate congratulations on my nomination to the Direction of Foreign Affairs.¹ Taking the opportunity of her passing through Paris, I went to thank her.

She first cross-questioned me minutely on my new duties, their mode of working, the levers which they controlled, the wide horizons under their purview, the exercise of dexterity and clear vision which they continually demand of the mind, and "the passionately interesting qualities they are bound to hold, so long as one has a taste for the great international problems, and does not dread responsibility."

¹ On January 25, 1912, M. Poincaré, who had just been installed at the Quai d'Orsay as Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs, had recalled me from Sofia to intrust me with the Directorship of Foreign Affairs.

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Then, "careful to be economical with her time," she turned quickly to present-day questions:

"It seems to me," she said, "that there is plenty of electricity in the air. Don't you think that a storm is brewing? This Turco-Italian war won't finish it! The bombardment of the Dardanelles the other day very nearly reopened the whole Eastern question. . . . And what a seething in the Balkans! What tricks is your august friend Tsar Ferdinand up to? I should say he was planning some dramatic tableau!"¹

She concluded this picture, unhappily only too accurate, with a very just observation:

"The gravest point I can see in the state of Europe is the antagonism between England and Germany. There is no doubt that Lord Haldane's mission to Berlin completely failed;² in any case I have been told so in letters from London. . . ."

She was led on to tell me of a curious interview which she had with the Emperor William II, five years ago.

¹ It was just at this time that Tsar Ferdinand was using his ingenuity to link up Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro in the coalition which declared war on Turkey on October 16th, 1912.

² British Secretary of State for War, February 9, 1912.

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"It was on June 27, 1907, in the fjord of Bergen on the Norwegian coast, where I had put in on board my yacht *Thistle*. When I arrived, the fjord was full of German cruisers awaiting the Kaiser, and you may imagine that this surprise was far from pleasing to me. My first thought was to take to the open sea again, but I thought this might look like flight . . . which is not at all to my taste. Besides, my yacht was in urgent need of taking on fresh stores at Bergen. So I stayed in the roads. A few hours later, close on midnight, I was abruptly awakened by a violent cannonade—the *Hohenzollern* was entering the roads. You know that as a general rule gun-salutes are not given after dark; but William II no doubt was anxious to impress my imagination with these thunderclaps. Alas! my imagination had already been impressed only too painfully! I could not fall asleep again, particularly after the *Hohenzollern* sent over a message to the commander of the *Thistle* that the Emperor would be calling on me next morning at eleven o'clock. . . . That visit lasted beyond noon, and left me with a hateful and disturbing recollection. The Kaiser spoke at great length about France: 'I assure you,' he said, 'that

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I am animated by the best intentions in her regard: I should like to come to an understanding with her, make an alliance with her, carry out a wide policy with her. But it's impossible! The French do not understand me; they have taken a dislike to me. Look, for instance: several times I have let them know of my wish to go to Paris. Well? No, no, they don't want to see me!' I did not trouble to answer him that, if he wanted to win French sympathies, he would have to proceed on very different lines, and that Tangier was certainly not the road to bring him to Paris."

"That did not prevent him from doubling his error in geography four years later, and even aggravating it by the insulting demonstration at Agadir!"

"What do you expect? He is incorrigible. He listens to nobody; he listens only to himself; he gets drunk on his own words. . . . But his remarks about France were not the most disquieting thing in our conversation: it was what he said concerning England. . . . Oh, how he hates England! For more than twenty minutes he ranted against her, and especially against King Edward, whom he accused of

every crime. . . . When he was leaving me, he caught sight of a portrait of Queen Victoria on one of the tables, that photograph you see there; it goes everywhere with me. At that he stopped, his fist on his hip, his chest thrown out, with an air of fury. And in this theatrical pose he exclaimed: 'When she died *they* did not send me anything from her, not the most trifling souvenir; *they* shut me out from the family like a reprobate, like a leper!' "

"I can understand, madame, how this visit perturbed you. That lasting state of over-excitement, the exaltation of the ego, the craving for the lime-light, the domination by desire for power, the intoxication of the monologue, the fixed idea of being misunderstood and persecuted—these are all symptoms of a cerebral state familiar to the alienists. Prudence usually makes them advise internment."

A faint smile relaxed the features of the Empress as she asked me:

"But failing internment, what remedy can there be? For the danger of war is no longer in doubt."

"I can see only one remedy, and that is to consolidate the Triple Entente as much as possible; being purely defensive, it can live on the best of

terms with the Triple Alliance. The whole of M. Poincaré's policy is summed up in this formula of equilibrium and peace."

"And that is exactly how it is understood on the other side of the Channel. A letter I had from Princess Helena¹ the other day supports me in that."

Princess Helena, it appears, is a lady of high distinction of character, and has taken her mother's place in the affections of the Empress. And this called up to us the memory of Queen Victoria.

In a voice that showed her emotion, in an almost religious tone, the Empress said to me:

"You promised to tell the story of our conversations later on, when I have gone to my eternal rest. You must not fail to testify to my everlasting gratitude to that great queen who was the most devoted and generous and helpful of friends, to the Emperor and myself. . . . You would never believe all the delicate attentions she heaped upon us in those first cruel days of our exile. She always treated us as sovereigns, just as in the days when we were allies

¹Second daughter of Queen Victoria, Princess Helena was born in 1846, and in 1866 married Prince Christian of Denmark. They resided at the British Court.

of England; one day she said to me: 'You no longer have the sovereignty of power; but you have a still higher sovereignty, that of misfortune. . . .' Her visits to Chislehurst did us so much good! And how kind she was to my son when he was studying at Woolwich! She seemed to seek out every opportunity of being good to him, of distracting him, and of bringing some happiness into his sad youth! And in the end, when he died in the Queen's uniform, she personally presided at the funeral ceremony. Nor did she think her duty fulfilled by this ceremonial formality; she felt that my heroic boy deserved still better, and had a statue erected to him in the chapel at Windsor where the princes of the Royal Family are buried. From that time the Queen and I were no longer mere friends; we were sisters."

"Did you not find a bond with each other in thoughts for the future, touching the Prince Imperial?"

"Yes, it was our dream that he should marry Princess Beatrice.¹ Their tastes and characters were

¹ Youngest daughter of Queen Victoria, Princess Beatrice was born in 1857 and married Prince Henry of Battenberg in 1885. She is the mother of Princess Victoria, who married Alphonso XIII and became Queen of Spain in 1906.

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wonderfully well matched; everything pointed to their happiness. . . . And that dream also vanished, on June 1, 1879, under the Zulu assegais!"

After a long silence, while I saw a tear glistening in her eyelashes, the Empress gave me leave to go. But while I stooped to kiss her hand, she whispered shyly in my ear:

"I should so much like to ask you a question! Have you noticed that it is always when you are leaving me that I turn indiscreet?"

"Your Majesty is never indiscreet."

"Well, this is what I have to ask. If war seemed imminent and inevitable overnight, how would French opinion react? Has not socialist propaganda already made terrible inroads in the factories and barracks?"

"I feel no apprehension in that connection. Since the *coup* of Agadir, national feeling has greatly revived. And as for the spirit of the army, General Lyautey's reports from Fez enable me to guarantee that the soldierly virtues of the race have lost none of their former vigor. So I am certain that if France is attacked, the French people will rise to arms as one man. . . . Furthermore, I have in my

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private breviary a reflection which I have always felt as a powerful prop. It is Richelieu's, and he intrusted it to his *Testament Politique*: 'If our natural inconstancy flings us often into frightful chasms, our very buoyancy saves us from staying there; and so promptly does it extricate us, that our enemies cannot take the true measure of such frequent diversities, and have no time to profit by them.' "

The Empress seized my hands with violence:

"Oh, I beg you, write that down for me at once! It is admirable, and I don't want to forget it!"

And immediately I wrote it in her presence, and quickly made my escape from her thanks.

XII

The Second Empire and Russia.—The Crimean War. What motives brought Napoleon III to engage in it? The dispute over the Holy Places. "The Constantine of Christian France."—The Congress of Paris. Sudden veering of Imperial ideas. Morny. The British and Russian alliances.—The Polish insurrection of 1863. Strained Franco-Russian relations.—Visit of Emperor Alexander II to the Exhibition of 1867. Berezovski's attempt on his life. The "evil spell."—Bismarck's Machiavellian game: secret accord of Prussia and Russia in 1870.

MONDAY, JANUARY 19, 1914

VISIT to the Empress Eugénie, who is on her way from Farnborough to the Côte d'Azur.

After congratulating me on my recent appointment,¹ she continued in a grave and restrained tone:

"It is not only my friendly good wishes that go with you there; you will also be accompanied by my patriotic wishes. . . . I am not so indiscreet as to ask what your policy at St. Petersburg will be,

¹ On January 12, 1914, I had been appointed French ambassador in St. Petersburg, replacing M. Delcassé.

or in what spirit the French government has intrusted you with M. Delcassé's succession. But I fear your task will be a heavy one, for I see the future, the near future, as somber in the extreme. . . . May God be your help!"

Then, as if to emphasize her discretion, she led me rapidly over the neutral field of history, to the distant origins of the Franco-Russian alliance, to the mission that General de Castelbajac¹ had to fulfill at the court of Tsar Nicholas in 1852, to induce him to recognize the restoration of the Napoleonic dynasty.

"It was not M. de Morny, as is usually believed," she said, "it was General de Castelbajac who first had the idea of uniting France and Russia in a political collaboration of an enduring kind. . . . But in 1854 the Crimean War upset his whole arrangement. He left St. Petersburg in despair, for that Gascon gentleman had a fine heart."

"I understand, and share, his despair."

She could not suppress a slight start.

"Do you disapprove of the Crimean War? Answer me frankly."

¹ See Biographical Notes.

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"I disapprove of it because it was unnecessary and unprofitable. The quarrel over the Holy Places, even considered under the peculiar lens of 1854, was not worth a conflict. These monkish chicaneries, controversies over precedence and liturgies, quarrels over cupolas and crypts, tabernacles and altars of repose, lamps and keys, had been going on for centuries: they could very easily have been allowed to go on some time longer."

The Empress held up her head. With eyebrows frowning, and in a rough voice, she answered me:

"But behind the monks' chicanery there was a great question—the antagonism of the Greek Cross and the Latin Cross!"

"The old French monarchy was very familiar with that antagonism; but it never paid any heed to it. I am not aware that the differences of religion prevented Louis XVIII and Charles X, their ambassadors and Ministers, Montmorency and Richelieu, Mortemart and La Ferronays, Polignac and Chateaubriand, from reaching an admirable understanding with the schismatic autocrat of St. Petersburg, and on this selfsame Eastern question. As for the monks in the Holy Land, Orthodox or Catholic, they were

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begged to keep quiet. . . . Allow me to tell Your Majesty this, that in 1854 M. de Castelbajac was upholding one of the traditional maxims of our diplomacy."

I might have said much more on the folly of 1854, but how could I forget whom I was addressing? That brow before me still bore the shadow of a crown. So I lost the opportunity of knowing exactly what place was taken by consideration of internal politics in the external crisis which produced the war in the East. At the opening of his reign, in fact, Napoleon III felt the weight of ecclesiastical patronage burdensome to him, although without it he could not have restored the Empire, and although he still needed it to consolidate the new institutions. It was the time when the episcopal mandates were hailing in him "the Constantine of Christian France, the Charlemagne of modern times"; when he was negotiating with the House of Hapsburg a great conservative alliance that would have brought him at one step into the old monarchical Europe; the time, too, when he was secretly seeking from Pope Pius IX the strange project of having himself anointed by the Sovereign Pontiff in person at Notre-

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Dame in Paris. In the cloudy vistas of his fancy, the Eastern war was thus taking on the color of a crusade, which would offer the world the edifying spectacle of a penitent and regenerate France, the France of Clovis and St. Louis, the eldest Daughter of the Church, making ready to shield the Holy Sepulcher against the intolerable encroachments of heretic Russia. . . .

But we had now come to the Congress of Paris, to that spring of 1856 which is so luminous a date in the annals of the Second Empire. Without looking at me, and with an air of surprised and strained listening, as if to some inner voice, the Empress said to me:

"What might perhaps justify your view of the Crimean War is the abrupt veering round which I saw taking place in the Emperor as soon as the fall of Sebastopol allowed him to make peace. From that day he envisaged a new policy based on friendship with Russia. In that friendship he saw primarily the means of restraining Austria when the Italian question should come to a head; he even caught glimpses of the possibility of using it to profit Poland. You will also recall that during the con-

gress he never ceased to show Count Orloff the most delicate attentions."

"This *volte-face* of imperial ideas was not due, in any great degree, to M. de Morny's counsel?"

"Less than is supposed. M. de Morny planned a complete and positive alliance, like that of today. But the Emperor wanted only a friendly *rapprochement* without definite obligations, for he did not in the least intend to sacrifice the English alliance, which remained the groundwork of his policy."

"Could he not have linked up both alliances, as M. Delcassé has done?"

"No, that was impossible. It was a question of choosing one of two alliances. The situation in 1856 had nothing in common with that of 1904. The Treaty of Paris had put an end to the war, and the fighting was over; but the British statesmen, Palmerston, Russell, and Clarendon, not to mention Prince Albert, retained all their mistrust and detestation of Russia. Not one of them would have agreed to follow us in any close coöperation with our previous enemy. . . . No, I assure you that the restoration of friendly relations between Paris and St. Petersburg was the very most that circumstances at

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that time allowed. And that is what my husband did. He had every reason to congratulate himself on his relations with Alexander II. For instance, I need not tell you that, following on Solferino, Russia did us a great service by warning us of the great danger that threatened us from the direction of Prussia. At that period I was Regent; it was I who first received the Tsar's personal envoy, the aide-de-camp Schouvalov. And I can vouch for it that if, during those critical days of July, 1859, the German army did not attack us on the Rhine while our forces were held up in Lombardy, we owe it to the Tsar Alexander. . . . And so I am convinced that the force of circumstance would soon have converted the close relations between our two courts into a proper alliance, if one fine morning the bombshell of the Polish insurrection had not burst about our heads."

Growing more animated and exalted, she sketched in sweeping lines the drama of 1863, the risings in Warsaw and their terrible suppression, the whole of Poland blinded with blood as in a charnel-house:

"You cannot imagine the superb spectacle offered by this people, suddenly rising to the defense of their

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religion and their nationality. Since the revolt of Spain against the French dominion, nothing so heroic had ever been seen. . . .”

She emphasized the decisive part, the sublime part, played in the struggle by the Catholic priesthood:

“Every church was a living center of patriotism, wrath, and love. . . . Sermons and the Host both kindled men’s courage. . . . In battle, the strains of hymns drowned the rattle of musketry. . . . Condemned men walked to the scaffold with scapulars on their breasts and the image of the Christ before their eyes. . . . It was only then that I understood the great sayings of Montalembert, ‘Since the murder of Poland, Europe has been in a state of mortal sin. . . .’”

After this lyrical recitative, she resumed:

“The whole heart of France throbbed for Poland—and I am proud of it. From Republicans to Legitimists, and free-thinkers to clericals, from Jules Favre to Mgr. Dupanloup, from the Faubourg Saint-Germain to the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, there rose the same cry of admiration for the Poles, the same horror of Russia. . . . I admit it: I was among the most enthusiastic. For the first and only time in my life,

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I found myself in complete accord with my ferocious enemy, Prince Napoleon! I even wanted the restoration of the ancient Kingdom of Poland under the scepter of an Austrian archduke."

Thereupon she set forth the difficulties which the Imperial government found in resisting this running riot of French opinion. Had not Napoleon III set himself up as the champion of national independence? Was not the freeing of Poland, like that of Italy, one of the essential articles of his political creed? Had he not many a time blamed Louis Philippe for humiliating France by his inert, weak-kneed attitude before the insurrection of 1831?

And she then threw a clear and sober light on the vexatious debate which was carried on right through the year 1863, between Paris and St. Petersburg. France sided officially with Poland, the Cabinet of the Tuileries urging persistently that the cause of the martyr nation should be put before the tribunal of Europe. But the resistance of the Russian autocrat was unbending, and his irritation grew steadily greater, until the day when Napoleon III was forced to call a halt, having drawn upon himself that lofty reply of Alexander II which seems to bring a distant

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glimpse, as under a lightning flash, of all the hieratic pomp of an Imperial coronation in the Kremlin of Moscow: "I derive my power from God alone. My sole authority, therefore, in the fulfillment of my duty towards my peoples is from Him, and I am not bound to render account to anyone!"

For a moment the Empress halted, and then, a touch of bitterness showing in the corners of her mouth, she went on:

"To efface the memory of these painful incidents, we invited the Tsar to the Exhibition of 1867. He accepted with good grace. We prepared a dazzling reception in his honor, and the most princely hospitality. My husband and I made every effort to accommodate all his tastes. But the Parisian populace gave him an icy reception. When he was passing through the Palais de Justice to visit the Sainte-Chapelle, an impudent advocate called out in his face: 'Long live Poland, sir!' And next day, returning from Longchamp, he only miraculously escaped the revolver of Berezovski. When the would-be murderer appeared before the court of assize a few days later, the jury allowed him extenuating circumstances, after the defending counsel

had fulminated against 'the butcher of Poland'! It certainly looked as if some evil spell had been cast over our relations with Russia!"

As she unrolled this lamentable history of hers, I was able step by step to establish its counterpart on the Prussian side. On September 22, 1862, Bismarck was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, and it was on that date that he made his entry on the stage of high political affairs. He instantly perceived how the Polish revolution put trump cards in his hands to enable him to separate France and Russia, and on February 8, 1863, the Gortchakov-Alvensleben agreement obtained for the Tsar the military aid of Prussia against the rebels. In 1864 King William and his Imperial nephew were joyfully celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of 1814. In 1865, the aide-de-camp Schweinitz was maintaining cordial and continual relations between the Hohenzollerns and the Romanovs. In 1866, following after Sadowa, came the ostentatious mission of Marshal von Man-
teuffel to St. Petersburg. And finally, at the Ems interview on June 4, 1870, William obtained Alexander's secret assurance that if, in the event of a Franco-German war, Austria showed signs of siding

with France, the Russian armies would march on Vienna. Henceforth Bismarck was to have full freedom of movement towards the West. And thus, at each one of our disagreements with Russia, the Machiavelli of Berlin had planted one more Russian stake to mark the road towards Sedan.

The fire of the Empress's eye and voice had been sinking for some moments. She put an end to the conversation:

"You are leaving for St. Petersburg soon, no doubt?"

"I am on the eve of my departure."

"When you are presented to the Dowager Empress, do not forget to offer her my affectionate regards. Maria Fedorovna is one of my dearest friends. I am going to write to her, bidding her keep her warmest welcome for you and letting her know that you deserve her full confidence. She does not get on very well with her son, and not at all with her daughter-in-law; but at heart she is very French and very anti-German, and so may be able on occasion to give you some useful advice. She will especially set you on your guard against certain mystical and other influences, which she deplures, and which, I fear, will

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not make your task an easy one. To judge from what she told me recently, there are strange things happening at the court of the Tsars. 'Something is rotten in the state of Russia. . . .'—And now, good-by! When you are far away in all your glory, think sometimes of your old friend!"

XIII

1870 and 1914. Parallel of the two wars. "Why was there no party truce in 1870?"—The World War justifies the Empress for refusing to sign peace after Sedan and for supporting the government of National Defense. Her brave resistance to Bismarck's proposals: a letter from King William.—The Charlemagne talisman.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1919

IT IS six years since I last saw the Empress Eugénie. And what years!—Stopping for a week in Paris on her way to Cap Martin, she sent me word she "was impatiently awaiting me."

As soon as I set foot in her drawing-room, I was struck by her shattered physique. She is now ninety-three and a half, and so is entering on the last lap of the earthly cycle. Under the crown of snow-white hair, the color of her face is livid, the skin wrinkled and deeply furrowed, and the cheeks hang loose; the lips are colorless, the nostrils pinched, the eyes deep-sunk in the orbits, and the eyeballs glassy and fixed; her neck is fleshless, her hands the hands of a

skeleton. But I could see at once that this wrecked frame was still dominated by a spirit at once energetic, tenacious, and proud.

"Oh, Your Excellency! How I am touched to see you again after all that has happened!"

She uttered the words in a firm tone, propping herself on the arms of her chair to draw herself majestically up in her old manner. Then, throwing up her head, she said:

"You remember our conversation of 1906, and how M. de Courcel prophesied to you, that if God granted you normal long life, say a score of years more, you would see Alsace and Lorraine restored to France? I wrote down that prophecy at once, and had it constantly in my mind. But I never thought that I myself should live to see it fulfilled! Today I can understand why God has made me live so long. My dear friend Queen Victoria, who had an absolute trust in the Divine justice and goodness, used often to say to me: 'What we do not understand now we shall understand some day—in this life or the next. But we can be sure that the explanation will not be withheld.' God has graciously given me the explanation while I can still rejoice in it here

below. And I shall have the crowning consolation of seeing France reëstablished with her nationality intact! And I have also the relief of knowing that our dead of 1870, the heroes of Wissembourg and Forbach, of Froeschwiller and Reichshoffen, of Rezonville and Gravelotte, are at last requited for their sacrifice."

The trembling of her hands, her choking breath, and the cracking of her voice stopped her for a moment. But recovering herself, she concluded with moving solemnity:

"There is a prayer in the liturgy for those on the point of death, on which I have often pondered. It is the prayer which is recited at the last moment: '*Proficiscere de hoc mundo, anima christiana*' ('Leave this world, O Christian Soul; come forth from thy body'). Well, when my time comes, and the priest says over me those sublime words, my soul will obey gratefully and with a quiet heart."

I thanked her for making me the witness of such noble testimony. Everything she said later about the chief episodes of the World War proved to me that she has lived through them in the closest communion with the soul of France. I further observed

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that the memory of 1870 is continually mingled with them in her mind, like a *leit-motiv*. Thus, the party truce—the *Union Sacrée*, that miracle of enthusiasm and harmony which grouped all Frenchmen together against Germany throughout four years—drew this plaint from her lips:

“Why was not the same truce made round the Emperor and myself under the shock of our first disasters? Why were public passions let loose against us after Froeschwiller and Forbach, and yet were kept so tightly in hand after Charleroi? Why, in fact, was I not listened to on September 4th, when I implored them to call a truce to domestic quarrels and to think only of France. . . ?”

Further she said to me:

“I must do the Republic this justice: it was better prepared for the events of 1914 than we were for those of 1870; it had good military equipment and strong alliances. . . . I remember how, in 1871, during the frightful days that followed the signature of peace, my poor husband kept repeating between his sobs: ‘Heaven grant that this cruel lesson may not be lost! May Frenchmen draw a lasting lesson

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for the future from this catastrophe!' Well, the lesson was not lost; it bore its fruits!"

For a moment she closed her eyes as if plunging into the past, and then continued with warmth:

"Do you not consider that the World War justifies me absolutely for my belief that after Sedan France could still put up a fight? For supporting to the limit of my feeble powers the heroic efforts of the National Defense? And for always refusing to come to terms with Prussia, even at the risk of losing our last chance of recovering the throne? Heaven knows how the Imperialist party blamed my attitude and my feelings during those days! I was opposed even by my private entourage, even by my devoted friends of Hastings and Chislehurst!—You remember, I suppose, Régnier's intrigue, the missions of General Bourbaki and General Boyer, all the manipulations that Bismarck tried to hasten the yielding of Metz and the signing of peace?"

"Yes, I remember. But I should like to know, from Your Majesty's own lips, what was your exact part in all that imbroglio?"

"That is very simple. I shall first tell you what Bismarck wished to get from me. Claiming my

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powers as Regent, I was to have ordered Marshal Bazaine to issue a manifesto declaring that the army of the Rhine intended to remain faithful to its oath, to make itself the champion of the Napoleonic Dynasty, and to rally around me. Fortified by this *pronunciamento*, I was to order the marshal to hand over Metz to the Germans and come and join me with his troops at Calais or Rouen. There I would summon the Chambers, reconstitute the government, and negotiate peace. . . . I assure you I needed no reflection to reject such a project with indignation. For after all, what I was asked to do was nothing less than to surrender Metz, paralyze the work of National Defense, set up the army of the Rhine against the army of the Loire, and to let loose civil war! And all for what? To make peace as quickly as possible. . . . But what peace? Oh! I was told, an honorable peace, a moderate peace, like that signed by Austria in 1866, and in any case a much less exacting peace than would be forced on the Republic of the Fourth of September; for only the Empire could insure Germany of the one thing of essential importance to her—the maintenance of social order and the strict execution of the treaty. And they even

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went so far as to tell me, that in order to insure the advantage of negotiating with a solid government, Germany would claim no surrenders of territory, and at most would insist upon the dismantling of Strasbourg, which was to be proclaimed a 'free town,' and upon a heavy war indemnity!"

"Who told you these tales?"

"Who? Why, all the leaders of our party, refugees in London or Brussels, and notably Rouher, La Valette, Persigny, Chevrau. . . . I shall not disguise the fact that their main argument, that of less vigorous terms, made a deep impression on me. I wanted my conscience to be clear on this point, so I took my courage in both hands and wrote to King William of Prussia. . . . Then Germany had to put her cards on the table, and disclose her implacable resolve of tearing Alsace and Lorraine from us. And that is what Bismarck hoped to get from my weakness or my vanity, dangling before me the glittering prospect of a restoration of our dynasty! And that is the shameful trap I would have fallen into had I not resisted the promptings, and the abuse, of those around me! On October 27th these intrigues were

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cut short by the fall of Metz. . . . If there were others afterward, I knew nothing of them!"

What did she mean by those last enigmatic words, that allusion to "other intrigues" of which she disavowed any knowledge? Perhaps she was thus making it plain to me that she denied all complicity in that humiliating and barren negotiation which the prisoner of Wilhelmshöhe was weak enough to open with King William, acting in secrecy under the influence of an old friend, a conspicuous adept in intrigue, the Comtesse de X. . . .

But I had not the courage to ask her that when I saw her stopping once more with exhausted breath and quivering hands. So I stopped short at expressing my whole-hearted admiration for her firm resistance to the heady draughts offered by Bismarck. She answered me very simply:

"Political duty perhaps dictated differently to me; but honor forbade me to act otherwise than I did. . . . Yes, several times in my life I have noticed this: that the dictates of duty are not always irreconcilable with our selfishness or our cowardice; but with honor no compromise is possible."

In this connection she described to me a curious

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detail of great historical value. This was the letter addressed to her by King William on October 26, 1870, confirming the draconian demands of his chancellor. In this letter the Prussian monarch, speaking in the name of all Germany, declared:

"I love my country as you love yours, and consequently can understand the bitterness which fills Your Majesty's heart. . . . But after making immense sacrifices in her own defense, Germany is desirous of being assured that the next war will find her better prepared to repulse the aggression on which she can count as soon as France has restored her strength or gained allies. It is solely this regrettable consideration, and not my desire of national aggrandizement, which forces me to insist on cessions of territory which have no other end than that of pushing further back the starting-point of French armies in the future. . . ."

Thus, in justification of annexing our provinces, King William does not claim them as German soil which ought to return to the German birthright; he

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claims them as a safeguard against a future attack by French arms, as an advanced bastion, an outer rampart of the German Empire. Of the principle of nationality, of "the imprescriptible and primordial rights of ethnography" (to use the terms of the Treitschkes and Sybels and Mommsens), not one hint; strategic interests and military suitability are the sole motive put forward: the rape of Alsace and Lorraine is there made plain in all its brutal frankness—an act of robbery. I am therefore happy to learn that the Empress has lately consented to give up this precious autograph letter and present it to our National Archives. She ended with these words:

"You see what lies at the foundation of German unity and the noble titles it can vaunt: first, an abominable forgery—the Ems telegram; and then, the cynical avowal of a lie—that letter from William!"

The Empress went on to speak of another gift she has just made to France, one which, though having only a symbolic value, is none the less of the rarest worth—the Charlemagne talisman. This is a pendant of pearls and sapphires, the mount of which incases a fragment of the True Cross. Charlemagne wore it constantly on his person. It came to him

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from the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, who sent it to him from Bagdad with the keys of the Holy Sepulchre, the standard of Jerusalem, an ivory horn, and Damascene scimitars. It was still on his breast when he was buried in the Cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle. But in the twelfth century his tomb was opened, and the canons took out the sacred relic to expose it to the veneration of the faithful. And at last, on September 2, 1804, when Napoleon visited the Rhineland provinces in company with Josephine, he was pleased to *permit* the pendant to be offered to his consort, so that she could wear it at the forthcoming ceremony of the coronation. Ten years later the jewel was inherited by Queen Hortense, who passed it on to her son. And in this way, in the year 1853, Mlle. de Montijo found it among her wedding gifts. The Empress added:

"I cherished that jewel as the apple of my eye; I had it at my bedside when the Prince Imperial was born. . . . But after 1879, since I no longer had a direct heir, a very troubling question arose for me: what was to become of the relic after my death? Many a time the Archbishop of Cologne and the chapter of Aix-la-Chapelle implored me, on one pre-

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text or another, to restore it to the Carlovingian treasury. But I obstinately refused. Then I had thoughts of presenting it during my lifetime to Pope Leo XIII, in memory of Pope Leo III, by whom Charlemagne was crowned Emperor in the Basilica of St. Peter, before the tomb of the Apostles, on Christmas night, in the year 800. . . . But I reflected that, sooner or later, the Cologne or Aix-la-Chapelle people would recover the jewel from some complaisant Pope; for in strict theological law, no prescription operates on relics. . . . So I was left very much perplexed when the war of 1914 supervened. A flash of enlightenment came with the horror raised in me by the bombardment of Rheims. One fine morning I exclaimed: 'I shall bequeath the Charlemagne talisman to Rheims, and that will be the punishment of the barbarians!' It happened that I had close at hand the best qualified person to advise me in this connection, Dom Cabrol, the learned Abbot of Farnborough. He examined the legal means of carrying out the gift, and was able to find formulas by which, in any eventuality, neither the French government nor the Archbishop of Rheims, nor even the Holy See, could remove the talisman

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from the reliquary of our kings. Cardinal Luçon acquiesced in all the clauses, and last Sunday Dom Cabrol handed him the famous pendant. It will thus remain for evermore between the sacred ampulla and the chalice of St. Rémy. I suppose that you approve my gesture."

"How sincerely I do! The Charlemagne talisman could have had no final destiny more splendid than to commemorate the Teutonic barbarism in centuries to come."

I observed, however, that the clock marked five minutes to seven. Notwithstanding the strain on memory and attention which, for a woman of her age, is involved by a conversation already so prolonged, and one in which she took constant part, the Empress showed no sign of fatigue. I even had the surprise of seeing her, after a brief silence, start off again wholeheartedly on a new theme, namely, Russia.

"What an interesting mission you fulfilled there! Fascinating! It has been a catastrophe almost without parallel in history! Now, tell me quickly . . ."

And for half an hour longer she pressed me with questions on the portentous drama in which I had

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seen the Holy Russia of the Tsars sink forever into a gulf of horrors.

When she had finished her questioning, she said to me very graciously:

"If you come to the Côte d'Azur this winter, don't forget the Villa Cynos. It would give me great pleasure if you spared me a few minutes. You must tell me again about Russia, and tell me much more. . . . In May I expect to go to Spain. Nowadays I am just an old fluttering bat, no more, alas! But like the butterflies, I always feel I have to make for the sunlight. Besides, before death takes me, I want to see my Castilian sky once more!"

XIV

Proficiscere de hoc mundo.

SUNDAY, JULY 11, 1920

THE Empress Eugénie, who had been in Madrid for some weeks, staying with her nephew, the Duke of Alba, passed peacefully away this morning at the Palace of Liria, in her ninety-fifth year.

When I reflect on her long life and all its contrasts, and remember our many conversations and the brave confidences with which she so often honored me, I feel a desire that history should take into account all that she told me, in terms of such consistent nobility, for the clearing of her conscience and the solace of her soul.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES¹

Pierre Jules BAROCHE was born in 1802 and entered the Chamber first in 1843, making some reputation as one of the adversaries of Guizot during 1847-48. A staunch supporter of Louis Napoleon as President, he was Minister of Foreign Affairs until the *coup d'état* of December 2, 1851, after which he became vice-president of the Commission Consultative. He held the portfolio of Justice and Public Worship, 1863-69, and died in exile in the Channel Islands in 1870.

François Achille BAZAINE was born in 1811 and entered the army in 1831. He saw active service in Spain, Africa, the Crimea, and Italy before becoming divisional general under Forey in Mexico in 1862. He succeeded Forey there as commander-in-chief in the following year, and was made marshal in 1864. He remained in Mexico, where he married a young heiress, and made his influence felt in political as well as military affairs, until the withdrawal of the French from Vera Cruz in 1867. Despite the doubtful value of his Mexican services, it was Bazaine who became commander-in-chief of the French army in the field in 1870 when Napoleon III relinquished

¹ These few summary biographies are added to the English edition of M. Paléologue's book, not as in any way a full annotation of its text, but simply for the convenience of readers to whom some of the names alluded to in the "conversations" may not be so familiar as they would be to French readers. H. M.

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supreme command. But his lethargy and dubious judgment led to the fatal besieging of his army in Metz. There, after some still mysterious negotiations with the Prussians, Bazaine surrendered with his 140,000 men. In 1873 he was tried on a charge of treasonable dereliction of duty and was sentenced to twenty years' seclusion. He escaped to Italy in 1874 and died in Madrid in 1888.

Louis Joseph BUFFET was born in 1818 and entered politics in 1848. Under the Presidency of Louis Napoleon he held the portfolio of Commerce and Agriculture. Later he was an advocate of the "Liberal Empire" projects and held office as Minister of Finance under Émile Ollivier during 1870. After 1871 he was prominent as a conservative in the formation of the Third Republic, and held office during 1875-76. He died in retirement in 1898.

Barthélemy Dominique Jacques Armand, Marquis de CASTELBAJAC, was born in 1787, and served with gallantry and distinction in the Napoleonic Wars. His military career continued under the succeeding régimes, and from 1844 to 1854 he was envoy-extraordinary from France to Russia. He died in 1864.

The Empress CHARLOTTE OF MEXICO was the daughter of Leopold I, King of the Belgians, and was born at Laeken in 1840. In 1857 she married the Archduke Maximilian, brother of Francis Joseph of Austria, and

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went with him to Mexico in 1864. She left there alone in 1867 in a last endeavor to secure help for the sorely pressed Empire which had been thrust upon her husband, but her failure to do so brought about the complete loss of her reason. She remained insane until her death in Belgium in 1927.

Théophile DELCASSÉ was born in 1852, and held the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1898 to 1905, a period marked by highly important developments in French foreign policy. He again held office, but not so successfully, in 1914, and died in retirement in 1923.

Édouard DROUYN DE LHUYS was born in 1805 and entered diplomacy in 1831. He became Minister of Foreign Affairs after the fall of Louis Philippe in 1848, and went to London as French ambassador in the following year. He again held office as Foreign Minister from 1852 to 1855 and from 1862 to 1866. He fled abroad on the downfall of the Empire, but returned in 1871 and died in retirement in 1881.

Jules FAVRE, one of the most determined foes of the Bonapartist régime, was born in 1809. He held a post in the Ministry of the Interior in 1848 and put up a strenuous resistance to the Presidency and the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon. In 1858 he used the opportunity of his defense of the conspirator Orsini to deliver a formidable indictment of the régime and its origins, and in the same year was elected to the Legislative Body.

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He founded a Republican newspaper, *L'Électeur*, in 1868, and after Sedan was a leader in the movement for the deposition of the dynasty. As Minister of Foreign Affairs after the *débâcle*, he negotiated, none too well, with Bismarck. He held office under Thiers in 1871, resigning in that year to return to legal practice. He died in 1880.

Jules François Camille FERRY, another determined foe of the Second Empire, was born in 1832 and suffered a term of imprisonment for political offenses in 1864. A member of the left in the Legislative Body in 1869, he was a member of the Government of National Defense in 1870-71. Under the Third Republic he held office on several occasions, his name being most prominently associated with anti-clerical activities. He died in 1893.

Antoine Alfred Agénor, Duc de Guiche et de GRAMONT, was born in 1819 and entered the diplomatic service after the *coup d'état* of 1851. Ambassador at Rome, 1857-61, and at Vienna, 1861-70, he was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs under Ollivier in January, 1870. His responsibility for the headlong conduct of affairs leading up to the outbreak of war in that year is a grave one. He resigned in August, 1870, and died in 1880.

Princess MATHILDE BONAPARTE, daughter of King Jerome of Westphalia, was born at Trieste in 1820. At an early age she was betrothed to Prince Louis Na-

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oleon, her cousin, but the projected marriage was broken off by her father after the prince's attempted *coup* at Strasbourg. She made an unhappy marriage with Anatole Demidoff, Prince of San Donato, but was soon separated from him. It was at a *soirée* at Princess Mathilde's that Napoleon III first met Mlle. Eugénie de Montijo. Her social position under the Empire was naturally very prominent, but she was not sufficiently implicated in the politics of the régime to incur exile after 1871, and her hôtel in the Rue de Berri, with her château at Saint-Gratien, long remained a relic of the former splendors of Imperial society, and her cosmopolitan *salon* was easily one of the most important of its time. She died in 1904.

Archduke Ferdinand Joseph MAXIMILIAN, EMPEROR OF MEXICO, younger brother of Francis Joseph of Austria, was born in 1832. He married Charlotte, daughter of Leopold I of the Belgians, in 1857. He accepted the offer of the Imperial throne of Mexico from the group of Mexican *émigrés* in Europe, and with the understanding that he would be amply supported by France and the other Powers, sailed for Mexico in 1864. The new-made Empire, however, never came to full birth, and after the total withdrawal of French military support, Maximilian was captured by the insurgent party and shot at Querétaro in 1867.

Richard Clement Joseph Lothair Hermann, Prince de METTERNICH, son of the famous Austrian diplomat, was born in 1829. He became secretary of the Austrian em-

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bassy in Paris in 1854. During the Italian war of 1859 he retired to Vienna, but returned to Paris as ambassador after the peace of Villafranca. He remained there in that capacity until 1871, and died in 1895. His wife, the beautiful Princess Pauline de Metternich (1836-1921), whom he married in 1856, was one of the leaders of the society of the Tuileries.

Charles Auguste Louis Joseph, Duc de MORNAY, was the natural son of Queen Hortense by the Comte de Flahault, and so the uterine brother of Napoleon III. He was born in 1811 and in early life served in the army. He engaged in various unsuccessful commercial operations and then devoted himself to the Bonapartist cause. One of the chief instigators and engineers of the *coup d'état*, he thereupon became Minister of the Interior, but soon resigned and became a Deputy in the Legislative Body, of which from 1854 he was president. In 1856-57 he was ambassador to Russia, and while there married the Princess Troubetzkoi. A highly picturesque figure of the Second Empire, Mornay had the reputation of a persistent intriguer in the worlds of finance, politics, and gallantry. A famous sketch of this side of his character, drawn with a novelist's freedom of line, is to be found in Daudet's *Le Nabab*. He died in 1865.

Joseph Charles Paul, PRINCE NAPOLEON, son of King Jerome and brother of Princess Mathilde, was born in 1822. Until the birth of the Prince Imperial, he was the recognized heir to the Imperial throne, and through-

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out the Empire was a bulwark of the democratic as against the absolutist group. He was thus in constant opposition to the Empress Eugénie. His participation in the Crimean campaign left him with the famous nickname of "Plon-Plon" and a probably unmerited reputation for cowardice. He became Minister for the Colonies in 1858 and commanded the French army in Tuscany in 1859. His protests against the Mexican adventure led to his retirement from public position, but he was influential in the Liberal reforms of 1869. The death of the Prince Imperial in Zululand in 1879 made him again the Bonapartists' heir-apparent, but his democratic ideas were too advanced for the champions of the fallen dynasty, and they looked rather to his son, Napoleon Victor Bonaparte, as their chosen leader. Prince Napoleon died in Rome in 1891.

Count Constantine NIGRA, was born in 1827 and was one of Cavour's secretaries. He came to Paris after Villafranca as Italian minister-plenipotentiary, negotiated the cession of Nice and Savoy to France, and became ambassador in Paris in 1861. In that post he remained throughout the Empire, after which he served in St. Petersburg, London, and Vienna. He retired from public life in 1904 and died in 1907.

Émile OLLIVIER was born in 1825. He was elected to the Legislative Body in 1857 and at first showed himself in opposition to the régime. But he gradually came to support it, though pressing for the modification of its

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absolutism. In January, 1870, he was appointed head of the constitutional cabinet, but failed to work the new system of the "Liberal Empire," and the outbreak of war left him totally discredited. He retired on August 9, 1870. He published, *inter alia*, a very lengthy history, *L'Empire Libérale*, and died in 1913.

Felix ORSINI was born in Italy in 1819. He was the chief figure in the attempted assassination by bomb of the Emperor and Empress at the Opéra on January 14, 1858. He had previously taken active part in the nationalist struggle in Italy. Defended by Jules Favre, he was the hero of the anti-Imperial extremists, but was executed on March 13, 1858. His attempt was the pretext for wholesale arrests of anti-Bonapartists throughout the country.

Jean Gilbert Victor Fialin, Duc de PERSIGNY, was born in 1808. After some years in military and journalistic adventuring, he linked himself with the exiled Louis Napoleon and directed the active stream of Bonapartist propaganda in France. He took part in the abortive affairs of Strasbourg and Boulogne, and spent his subsequent captivity in writing on the utility of the Pyramids. In 1848 he was aide-de-camp to the Prince-President, and was, of course, a prime mover in the *coup d'état* three years later. He became Minister of the Interior in 1852 and was twice ambassador in London between 1855 and 1860. He was again Minister of the Interior from 1860 to 1863. He died in 1872.

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Henri ROCHEFORT was the pen name of Victor Henri, Comte de Rochefort-Luçay. He was born in 1830 and became an editor of the *Figaro* in 1863, but lost this post owing to his first biting attacks on the Empire. In 1868 he founded his own weekly, *La Lanterne*, the most trenchantly formidable enemy of Napoleon III in the ranks of the Press. After conviction for *lèse-majesté* he conducted the paper from Brussels. On the downfall of the Empire he championed Gambetta, and later Boulanger, with his remarkable gifts of irony and enthusiasm. After the Boulangist fiasco in 1889 he was in exile until 1895. He died in 1913.

Eugène ROUHER was born in 1814 and was returned to the Legislative Body in 1849. At the end of that year he was appointed Minister of Justice, and thereafter was almost continually in office until 1869. In 1863 he became president of the Council of State and was recognized as the chief advocate of Napoleon III in the Legislative Body. He was a firm foe of the constitutional tendencies which arose in the later years of the Empire, and resigned rather than accede to the reforms of 1869. After 1871 he worked hard for the Bonapartist cause, but to no effect, and he died insane in 1884.

Louis Jules TROCHU was born in 1815, and attracted some attention as an officer in the campaigns in the Crimea and Italy. He carried out some administrative work of importance in the war office during 1866-67, but fell into disfavor at court by publishing criticisms of

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the régime in relation to the army. He was on half-pay until his appointment by Napoleon III, in August, 1870, as Governor of Paris, and was then put in command of all the troops designed for the defense of the capital. He did not stand by the falling Empire, however, and on September 4th became president of the Government of National Defense, in addition to his military functions. His rather inglorious public career ended in 1872 and he died in retirement in 1896.

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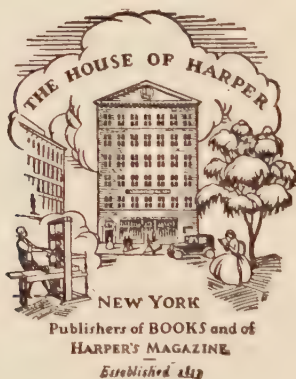
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